JULY 1952

COMMENTARY

The Immigration Fight Has Only Begun — OSCAR HANDLIN

Liberal Judaism as a Living Faith — ROBERT LANGBAUM

Behind the "Anti-Americanism" of Mr. Bevan — GEORGE LICHTHEIM

The Old Days in Dublin — JESSIE S. BLOOM

Our Freedom—and the Rights of Communists — ALAN F. WESTIN

"Anti-Semitism" and the Rosenberg Case — LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ

The Vanishing Jew of Our Popular Culture — HENRY POPKIN

Death of a Grandmother—A Poem — HARVEY SHAPIRO

The Loan—A Story — BERNARD MALAMUD

They Were, We Are—A Poem — JACOB SLOAN

From the American Scene—
I Got Two, Who Got Three? — NATHAN HALPER & BENJAMIN MANDELKER

Cedars of Lebanon—
From "The Mantle of Elijah" — ELIJAH BASYATCHI

On the Horizon—
Selling Paris on Western Culture — HERBERT LUETHY

The Study of Man—
Explaining the Revolution of Our Time — RICHARD H. S. CROSSMAN

BOOKS IN REVIEW

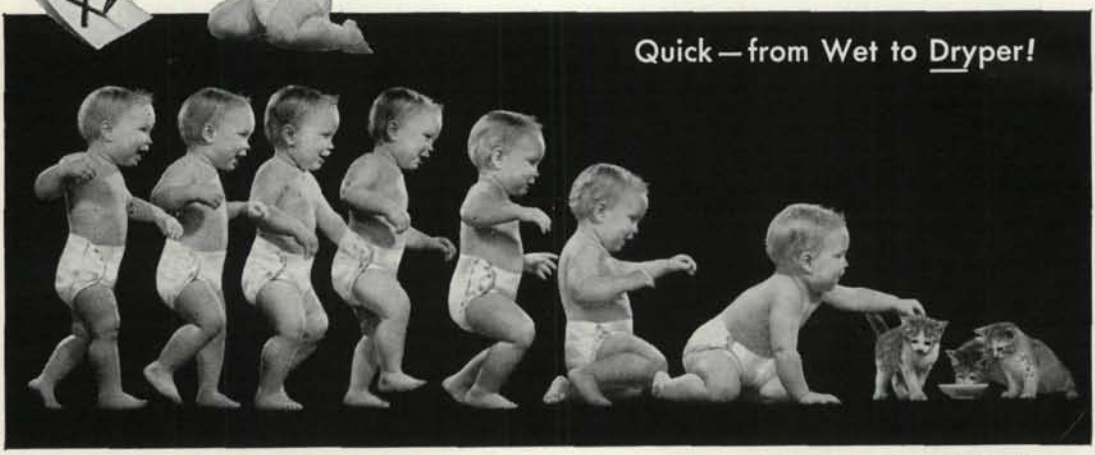
Nathan Glazer — Heinz Politzer — Morroe Berger
Lionel Abel — Ralph Weiman

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

50c

Baby votes the DRY ticket!



For a Cool, Dry Summer...

Playtex® Dryper®

keeps your baby sweet and clean...comfortable and protected —as no ordinary diapering does

Discover how happy and care-free your precious baby is...in wonderful PLAYTEX *Dry*per. Here's the modern pad-in-panty diapering that frees your baby from the soggy discomfort of old-fashioned bulky diapers...makes changes faster...easier...and safer, and as frequently as needed. *Dry*per brings your baby a whole new world of cloud-soft comfort... helps to protect baby from diaper rash and chafing, diaper-wet irritations. *Dry*per pads simply flush away when soiled. No more soiled diapers...no more diaper odors. With day and night protection— *Dry*per keeps your baby "socially acceptable"* always.

Featured at your favorite Department Store and wherever Baby Needs are sold.

Playtex for the nicest things next to baby

DRYPER PANTIES SHEETS BIBS OIL POWDER CREAM

©1952 International Latex Corp., PLAYTEX PARK, Dover Del.

FLUSHAWAY PAD INSIDE WATERPROOF PANTY —THAT'S PLAYTEX DRYPER!

For clean, dry change simply slip fresh *Dry*per Pad under soft nylon-web lining of waterproof *Dry*per Panty. Flush away soiled Pad. Made of cloud-soft Cellulon,* amazing stitchless, threadless, non-woven material that soaks up *8 times its own weight in moisture.* Pads fit snugly, neatly. *Dry*per Panty's top and bottom flaps confine wetness to panty area.

PLAYTEX® DRYPER® PADS box of 100 **$1.29** and **$1.49**

PLAYTEX® DRYPER PANTY® . . . . . each **$1.49**

Small= birth to 12 lbs. Medium=13 to 18 lbs. Large=19 to 24 lbs. Extra-Large=24 lbs up.

*TRADE MARK

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTARY

A Statement of Aims

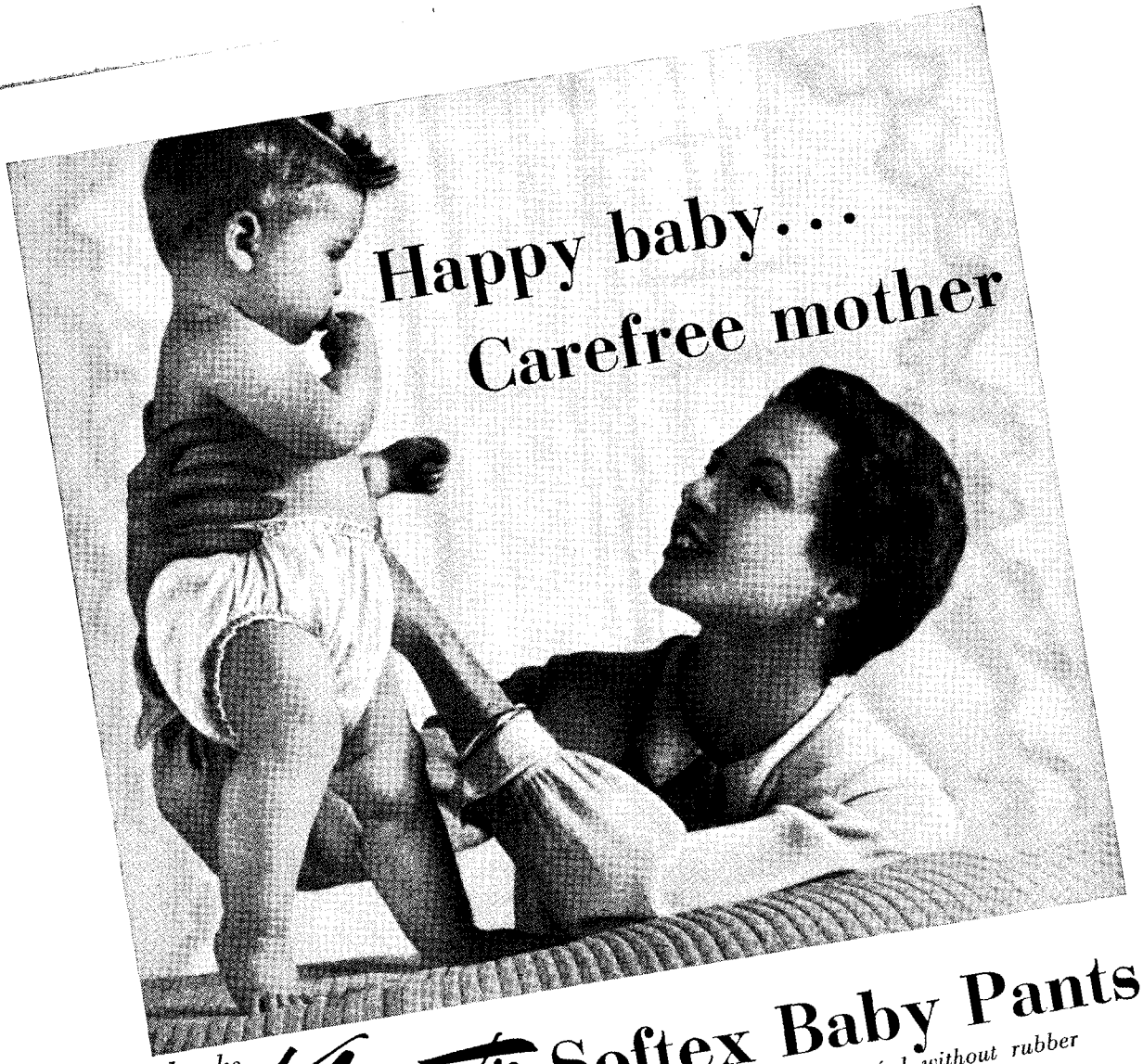
In sponsoring COMMENTARY, *the American Jewish Committee aims to meet the need for a journal of significant thought and opinion on Jewish affairs and contemporary issues. Its pages will be hospitable to diverse points of view and belief, and it hopes to encourage original creative endeavor in the various fields of culture.*

The opinions and views expressed by COMMENTARY'S *contributors and editors are their own, and do not necessarily express the Committee's viewpoint or position. Its sponsorship of* COMMENTARY *is in line with its general program to enlighten and clarify public opinion on problems of Jewish concern, to fight bigotry and protect human rights, and to promote Jewish cultural interest and creative achievement in America.*

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

JACOB BLAUSTEIN, *President*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



thanks to Kleinert's **Softex Baby Pants**

waterproofed without rubber

These wonderful baby pants not only won't . . . *can't* cause diaper rash or heat rash . . . they actually help prevent them! Can't chafe, heat up or stick to baby. Can't bind . . . they gently caress baby's legs and middle. Even the newest baby can wear them around the clock. No more soaked sheets and sleepers, shirts and blankets. Mother is saved many hours of work! Remember . . . Softex baby pants are waterproofed *without* rubber. They can't crack, peel or stiffen. They'll stay soft through innumerable launderings . . . wash and dry in seconds. In pretty colors and white.

Silk Softex Baby Pants . . . $1.00

® Kleinert's

famous for dress shields, too.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTARY

JULY 1952 VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1

The Immigration Fight Has Only Begun	*Oscar Handlin*	1
Liberal Judaism as a Living Faith	*Robert Langbaum*	8
Behind the "Anti-Americanism" of Mr. Bevan	*George Lichtheim*	15
The Old Days in Dublin	*Jessie S. Bloom*	21
Our Freedom—and the Rights of Communists	*Alan F. Westin*	33
"Anti-Semitism" and the Rosenberg Case	*Lucy S. Dawidowicz*	41
Death of a Grandmother *A Poem*	*Harvey Shapiro*	45
The Vanishing Jew of Our Popular Culture	*Henry Popkin*	46
The Loan *A Story*	*Bernard Malamud*	56
From the American Scene I Got Two, Who Got Three?	*Nathan Halper & Benjamin Mandelker*	60
Cedars of Lebanon From "The Mantle of Elijah"	*Elijah Basyatchi*	65
On the Horizon Selling Paris on Western Culture	*Herbert Luethy*	70
They Were, We Are *A Poem*	*Jacob Sloan*	76
The Study of Man Explaining the Revolution of Our Time	*Richard H. S. Crossman*	77
Letters from Readers		83
Books in Review		
The Future of American Politics, by Samuel Lubell	*Nathan Glazer*	87
The Need for Roots, by Simone Weil	*Lionel Abel*	92
Blood, Oil and Sand, by Ray Brock	*Morroe Berger*	95
Spark of Life, by Erich Maria Remarque	*Heinz Politzer*	96
Tongue of the Prophets, by Robert St. John	*Ralph Weiman*	97

Associate Editors
NATHAN GLAZER
CLEMENT GREENBERG
ROBERT WARSHOW

Editor
ELLIOT E. COHEN

Business Manager
FRANCES GREEN

Managing Editor
IRVING KRISTOL

Assistant Editor
SHERRY ABEL

Advertising: MARY LEA SHIMAN

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE
ALAN M. STROOCK, *Chairman*
CHARLES D. BREITEL, MAX ENGLER, ALBERT FURTH, MAURICE GLINERT, RALPH K. GUINZBURG, SYDNEY M. KAYE, ANNE W. LANGMAN, HILDA LEE, LOUIS M. RABINOWITZ, MARIE L. ROTHSCHILD, RALPH E. SAMUEL, DAVID SHER, JACK D. TARCHER, MILTON WEILL, IRA M. YOUNKER

COMMENTARY, incorporating *Contemporary Jewish Record:* Published monthly by the American Jewish Committee. 50c a copy; $5.00 a year; 2 years $8.00; 3 years, $10.00. Canadian and Foreign $1.00 a year additional. Offices, 34 West 33rd Street, New York 1. Re-entered as second class matter October 30, 1945 at the post office in New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1952, by the American Jewish Committee. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved by the publisher in the United States, Great Britain, Mexico, and all countries participating in the International Copyright Convention and the Pan-American Copyright Convention. Indexed in International Index to Periodicals, Magazine Subject Index, and Public Affairs Information Service.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF

COMMENTARY

Report on French North Africa — *Herbert Luethy*

As even the textbooks inform us, "the colonial world is in revolt." But what this "colonial world" really is, what it is in revolt against, and what it is striving *for*, are questions generally answered by vague references to Fourth of July platitudes. Herbert Luethy reports on the situation in French Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, where Arabs, Berbers, Jews, French and Italian settlers, French administrators, and UN investigators are weaving a tragically tangled web.

The Doctor's Daughter — *Helen Ratnoff Plotz*

To be the doctor's daughter on the Lower East Side some years ago really meant something. Dr. Ratnoff's little girl had to be in Carnegie Hall when other children were reveling in the streets, but she found her social position had its compensations, too. A portrait of the rising Jewish middle class of a generation ago; in the department "From the American Scene."

Lessons of the Second World War — *Hans J. Morgenthau*

We all learn from history, or at least like to think we do. Usually, however, we learn pretty much what we wanted to believe in the first place. Hans Morgenthau examines some of the books that try to "explain" why we lost the Second World War politically, after having won it on the battlefield; and he suggests that the lessons of history—particularly the recent history of the conflict between East and West—have to be drawn with caution.

I Was Only Seventeen — *Guenther Anders*

A poignant account of a meeting between a Jew who has returned to his native Vienna and an ex-SA trooper who seeks his help.

The Third-Generation Immigrant in America — *Marcus L. Hansen*

There has been much discussion of the second-generation immigrant, i.e., the children of immigrants in America; but what about the third generation? In an address delivered not long before his premature death in 1938, Marcus Hansen, the dean of American historians of immigration, tells us what we may expect of the third generation—and provides us with some clues to the state of the American Jewish community to come. Oscar Handlin supplies a commentary on Hansen and this essay.

Great Literature in Beepage — *Spencer Brown*

It is only natural that the great books of the ages should be translated into many tongues. Of late, so passionate has been the interest in these books that a new language has been invented for them to be translated into. This language is Beepage, into whose secrets Mr. Brown introduces us.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

COMMENTARY

THE IMMIGRATION FIGHT HAS ONLY BEGUN

Lessons of the McCarran-Walter Setback

OSCAR HANDLIN

THE passage of the McCarran-Walter Bill has frustrated five years of effort to reform our immigration laws. At this writing, the news comes that President Truman has vetoed the bill, and it is difficult to predict whether or not it will be passed over his veto. But whether the measure ever becomes law or not, it represents a resounding defeat for all those who have toiled to bring into conformity with present needs and ideals the complex code by which we regulate the admission of immigrants.

That this code demands revision is almost beyond argument. The considerations in favor of a total overhauling of these regulations have been frequently and forcefully stated (e.g., see COMMENTARY, January 1947). The laws under which we now operate were enacted thirty years ago and are unrealistic in terms of the needs of 1952. Their intention was, presumably, to give the United States a stable flow of newcomers, fixed at a little over 150,000 a year. These laws have never done so. Assigning the largest number of places to applicants from countries like Great Britain which no longer produce substantial numbers of emigrants, and limiting the available places for countries like Italy which do, they have reduced the stream to a negligible trickle. In recent years the laws have prevented us from making useful additions to our manpower; the shortages of the early postwar years might certainly have been alleviated under a more flexible policy. In a future in which every competent demographer predicts for us a declining birth rate, such additions may become more and more desirable, if not actually essential to our national survival.

Most important, the present system clashes with the democratic ideals of most Americans today. The product of an earlier troubled postwar period, it reflects the spirit

---

DESPITE the President's veto, the McCarran-Walter immigration bill is a defeat for those who hoped for revision of the racist immigration laws which for some three decades have nakedly contradicted our democratic principles. But the debate over this bill has at least brought into the light of public discussion a problem that too many of our citizens have regarded as settled and forgotten. If the various "minority groups" that together make up the American "majority" can now be awakened to a sense of their legitimate interest in the immigration problem, OSCAR HANDLIN believes, we may yet achieve a policy more in keeping with our national character and aspirations. Mr. Handlin, professor of history at Harvard, is the author of *The Uprooted,* that distinguished study of the American immigrant which won this year's Pulitzer Prize for history. He was born in 1915 and attended Brooklyn College and Harvard University. His most recent article in COMMENTARY was "How U. S. Anti-Semitism Really Began" in the June 1951 issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of isolationism and a racist xenophobia that in those same years was also expressed through the Ku Klux Klan and in the rejection of the League of Nations, and it is clearly anachronistic at a time when the United States strives to speak for the free peoples of the world against totalitarianism. A quota system setting up a hierarchy of desirable and undesirable peoples is offensive to our allies and potential allies throughout the world, and is a slur upon millions of our own citizens.

THE need for some fundamental change became apparent shortly after the end of the war in 1945. As immigration resumed, even at the low levels of 1946 and 1947, it revealed scores of inconsistencies and manifest injustices, altogether apart from the major defect in policy represented by the system of national-origins quotas itself. A long series of hearings before the immigration subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee evoked reams of evidence, and this spring the Congress was offered two sets of bills dealing with the immigration problem.

In accepting the proposals of Senator McCarran and Representative Walter, and rejecting an alternative set of proposals offered by Senators Lehman and Humphrey and Congressman Roosevelt, the Congress has indicated that it does not wish to make any departure from the principles of the legislation of 1924. For the McCarran-Walter Bill is one of the worst statutes to which an American Congress ever gave its approval. Far from correcting the inadequacies of our immigration code, it multiplies them. Not since the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 has an act of Congress come so close to subverting the underlying assumption upon which the conception of citizenship in the United States rests: the assumption that there are no degrees of citizenship, that all Americans are completely equal in rights whatever their place of birth.

The bill perpetuates all but one of the regrettable features of the old system and, in addition, introduces a variety of new ones. It does fortunately make available quotas—albeit small ones—to the countries of Asia, and thus ends one of the worst of the old invidious discriminations. But the regressions in the new measure more than cancel this slight gain. Retaining the rigid national quotas, it actually raises and fortifies the racist barriers. It thus deprives the Negroes of the British West Indies of the right to take advantage of the unused quotas of Great Britain. It defines as Oriental persons with even one Asiatic parent, no matter what their place of birth; the son of a Chinese mother and an English father, born a British citizen in Britain, would not be free to enter our country under the British quota. Professors, ministers, and refugees from religious persecution would lose the few advantages they now enjoy in seeking admission to the United States. In addition, the bill curtails severely the civil liberties of immigrants and resident aliens. The latter would be compelled to register annually, and two failures to do so would be cause for summary deportation. Convictions for crime, anywhere, at any time, would bar an applicant for admission to this country; there would no longer be, as there is now, some consideration of the surrounding circumstances of the crime—when it occurred, whether it involved moral turpitude, the nature of the convicting tribunal, or whether it would be considered a crime in the United States. Resistance to Mussolini in 1924 or the Czech government in 1948 might conceivably be grounds for exclusion. The power of immigration and consular officials, already arbitrary, would be increased. Most disturbing, the McCarran-Walter Bill sets up a class of conditional, or second-class, citizens: under its provisions, our naturalized citizens would not immediately receive rights equal to those of the native-born, as they have in the past, but for five years their citizenship would remain probationary, subject to revocation for Communist affiliation.

That such bitter fruit should have come forth from all the effort expended toward securing the revision of our immigration laws is undoubtedly discouraging. Yet it is im-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

portant to understand the true nature of this setback; hysterical reactions to it can only frustrate the ultimate purpose of achieving an effective democratic policy in this field. The McCarran-Walter Bill is not the product of any devious reactionary conspiracy. Nor does it indicate any widespread adherence to racist doctrines among the American people. Its motives and causes lie rather in the peculiarities of an immediate political situation, in the persistence of certain anachronistic habits of thought, and in a widespread apathy in sectors of the population that ought to be most actively concerned with these matters. An understanding of these elements will point the way toward the strategy that might bring about at last the needed long-term reform of our basic immigration legislation.

PAT MCCARRAN, Senator from Nevada, illustrates in his own person the vestigial fears that animated many who voted for his proposals, and his position in the Senate reveals the peculiar political configuration within which the measure was considered.

McCarran is not just a bitter old man resentful of the changing America within which he lives. He is the symbol of a fossilized radicalism inadequate in its own day and mischievously incongruous in ours. A desperate quarrel with FDR drove him in 1938 into the camp of those who resist all changes and his Catholic sympathies early made him an admirer of Franco. But the roots of his feelings toward immigrants reach back to the unrecognized fears of his early manhood in the first decade of the century.

As a young man in Nevada, McCarran was moved by the quasi-populist ideas that swept through the Mountain States in the years before the First World War. Like many others swayed by the free-silver argument, McCarran absorbed a profound distrust of all that was international and a hatred of foreigners that was one of the by-products of the silver crusade. Often in the sentiments McCarran expresses in 1952 we hear the overtones of the shrill arguments of Tom Watson forty years ago.

McCarran is, furthermore, the son of immigrants, and a Catholic who grew to maturity in an era in which all immigrants—and particularly Catholics—lived under an incessant pressure to prove their loyalty. The charge of "un-Americanism" McCarran first heard directed against his church and against his parents' people. The first conception of Americanism he learned was from the lips of men who resented the right of immigrants to maintain their own ways of life and demanded total assimilation as the price of toleration. The venom McCarran now directs against the aliens was generated by the hatred of foreigners that was all about him in his youth and by the dim, recalled fear that he himself might be counted among them. That fear, joined to the atavistic fear of some international conspiracy, accounts for the iron determination which raised this old man from a sickbed and brought him to Washington to fight for his measure.

McCarran, however, is one man, and has one vote. The power he wields comes from his position in the Senate. The system of seniority has brought to the aging Senator from Nevada the chairmanship of the critical Judiciary Committee, a position that gives him a determining voice in the decisions that bring bills to the floor of the Senate. To the power derived from this official situation, McCarran has been able to join the weight of influence derived from his strategic political role. Responsible only to his safe little constituency in Nevada, he has long acted the free-wheeling independent, disregarding party discipline and presidential leadership alike. The emerging alliance of Dixiecrats and stalwart Republicans has enormously magnified the importance of that role; McCarran may well be capable of drawing from those groups almost enough votes to assure passage of any measure in which he is concerned. And in the case of the immigration bill he was able to count also upon support from the racist anxieties of the Southerners and the isolationist concerns of the Midwesterners.

Whatever other powers he has needed, Senator McCarran has been able to draw

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from his other role as chairman of the Internal Security Committee. That committee has thus far been largely preoccupied with Far Eastern policy, although its mandate was by no means limited to that area. Operating in the excited atmosphere generated by reckless charges of Communism, the committee has aroused more fears than it has stilled. Its inclination to call almost every kind of dissident a Communist, coupled with its opponents' insistence that there were no Communist conspirators at all, has stirred up a vast sense of uneasiness, and few public officials would lightly incur the enmity of the chairman of this committee. Out of his own fears and the fears of others, capitalizing on his key part in a touchy political situation, McCarran assembled the forces that brought him easy victory in the struggle to determine the future immigration policy of the United States.

It would be deceptive to allow the analysis to rest there, however. The supporters of McCarran's immigration policy have had their way through effective exploitation of the Senator's own position and of the new party alignments. But those who seek a reversal of his policy would be sadly mistaken to put their own faith in demagogy and political maneuvering. Even were such means available—and they are not—it would be unfortunate to permit the case for reform of the immigration laws to rest on the grounds of political expediency and partisan deals. It will be the part of principle as well as of tactics to abjure such methods altogether and to look elsewhere for reform in our immigration legislation.

IF WE cannot beat McCarran and his cohorts with their own weapons, we can do much to destroy the efficacy of those weapons. These maneuverings have succeeded because they have taken place in the half-light of public inattention. To understand how this could happen, we must move outside the realm of day-to-day politics and examine the more basic reasons why millions of Americans with a direct personal stake in the issue paid it no attention whatsoever.

The shadows of the bitter debate that accompanied the enactment of the immigration laws of 1919-1924 still hang over us. For thirty-five years, the long argument had proceeded acrimoniously and intemperately. Then it was over, and with the depression, the New Deal, and the new interests of social scientists, there was an inclination to let it die altogether. For the past twenty years only a handful of scholars have touched the question at all.

The result is that the scientific literature on this subject is still dominated by conceptions set forth in books written fifty years ago; and most of those books came from sociologists who assumed as a matter of course that it was possible and necessary to distinguish among the "races" of immigrants that clamored for admission to the United States, and who argued that immigrants brought wages down and forced native labor into unemployment, and that they increased crime and created slums. Such are the writings that still occupy the shelves of our libraries, such are the sources to which reference is still commonly made—for want of any better.

It was significant from this point of view to observe the reviews by sociologists of W. S. Bernard's judicious presentation of the problem in 1950, *American Immigration Policy—A Reappraisal*. Roy L. Garis of the University of Southern California, for instance, was content to repeat the conclusions of his own study, *Immigration Restriction*, of a quarter-century earlier; and E. P. Hutchinson of the University of Pennsylvania shrugged the whole question off as one that was safely closed.

Unfortunately, few among us are able to recognize the nature of the commitments we have allowed to be made for us. The liberalism of the 1930's, which regarded all men of apparent good will as members of the same camp, encouraged in this matter as in others a tendency to disregard meaningful distinctions. A particularly ironic example can be found in the case of Henry Pratt Fairchild, whose widely read book *Immigration*, which was published in 1913,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did more than any other single volume to poison the minds of a generation of Americans on the subject of immigration. As late as 1947 Professor Fairchild explicitly stated his belief in the ineradicable biological differences among races in a blindly prejudiced volume filled with attacks upon the "minorities" (*Race and Nationality as Factors in American Life*). Yet Professor Fairchild has acted as judge of the *Saturday Review*'s Anisfield-Wolf Award, given annually to the best book in the field of group relations. Such a choice simply points to the general ignorance of the nature of the issues involved and the casualness with which these matters are now treated.

More general evidence of disregard for the importance of this question may be found in the failure of liberals, even at the height of the New Deal when humanitarian sentiments in Congress were in the ascendant, to secure any relaxation of the laws of the 1920's. Our shocking failure to assist the refugees of the 1930's revealed the prevailing point of view with particular clarity.

A variety of elements probably joined to crowd this problem out of the thoughts of men of good will in the 1930's. The fact that such liberals as E. A. Ross and John R. Commons had once served in the forefront of the campaign to end immigration must have contributed to the indifference of their followers to the question. Again, though the liberals of the New Deal era did not of course accept the racist premises of their predecessors, it was possible in the 1930's to defend the quota policy on another ground: the necessity of barring culturally backward peoples who might more profitably remain in their own countries to prepare for the "inevitable" social revolutions. For all those who had lost faith in the expansive capacities of America, who talked of narrowing opportunities and closing frontiers, immigration may have seemed outdated, a "meaningless" meliorism.

More generally, it seemed futile to attempt to restore what had inevitably passed. The easier course was to treat the matter as closed and to refrain from raising issues of no immediate practical consequences. A liberal was above all, in those days, "realistic." It was not likely, after all, that a flow of peoples on the 19th-century scale would ever again become a significant part of American life. Why waste energy and thought on our cumbersome structure of immigration laws?

THERE is the crux of the matter. McCarran will not long occupy his present place; the political crisis which gives him so much of his power will be resolved after a longer or shorter interval; survivals of racist attitudes will gradually wither in the light of exposure. A public that understood its own interests could sweep away the obstacles to revision of these laws and bring them into accord with our national interests and ideals. Our central problem is to arouse the understanding of the mass of Americans to the significance of the problem.

Why are these laws important? As I have said, it is never again likely that the United States will welcome to its shores a million immigrants in one year as it did six times between 1905 and 1914. Even were there no restrictive statutes at all, our world would not be one of free movement; the high cost of transportation alone would surely hold down migration. If we wish to alter the code we have, it is not to restore a state of affairs now past, but because the laws themselves are bad and fail to express either the attitudes of Americans toward the world, or their conception of their own national identity.

The laws are bad because they rest on the racist assumption that mankind is divided into fixed breeds, biologically and culturally separated from each other, and because, within that framework, they assume that Americans are Anglo-Saxons by origin and ought to remain so. To all other peoples, the laws say that the United States ranks them in terms of their racial proximity to our own "superior" stock; and upon the many, many millions of Americans not descended from the Anglo-Saxons, the laws cast a distinct imputation of inferiority.

More recent defenders of the quota system, unwilling to endorse the open racism

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that gave it birth, have urged that the differentiations it establishes be regarded as cultural rather than racial. The South Italian or the Syrian, it is argued, is culturally less capable of adjusting to American life than the Englishman or the German. Alas for uneasy consciences!—there is no evidence to support that contention. We have had some sixty years of experience with the immigrants and the children of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and from Asia, and the results are clear for anyone who wishes to read them: allowed to settle in peace, every variety of man has been able to make a place for himself in American life, to his own profit and to the enrichment of the society that has accepted him. The dreaded "riff-raff" of 1910—Greeks, Armenians, Magyars, Slovaks, Polish Jews—are the respected parents of respected citizens today. All theory aside, these human beings are the decisive proof that our present immigration policy must be changed.

THUS far, we have been excessively cautious. Even the rejected Lehman-Humphrey-Roosevelt bill, though far superior to the McCarran-Walter Bill, compromised with the quota system, seeking merely to correct its more obvious abuses. What is needed, if we are to dramatize the issue properly and awaken Americans to its importance, is a direct frontal attack on the whole conception of the national origins quota.

The direction the attack ought to take is clear: immigration should be restricted in terms of the economic and social needs of the nation. We can set what limits we like on total numbers and express our preferences in terms that do no violence to American ideals. Although no adequate examination has ever been made of the possible means of selecting potential immigrants, it is enough to point to the fact that there are alternatives to the national origins quota. Preference might thus be given to certain professions or occupations to remedy deficiencies, as they occur, in the domestic labor supply. There might be tests, as there were even before 1924, of literacy, or of intelligence, or of liability to become a public charge. Priority could be given to applicants sponsored by friends or relatives in the United States. Or there might simply be waiting lists, as there are now for individual countries, with admission, in a sense, rewarding patience and determination.

Any one of these alternatives would be superior to the present basis of selection. Certainly, there ought to be no place in our laws for the racist ranking of nationalities. The Americans of the 19th century had confidence enough in their own society and in their own institutions to believe any man could become an American. More than ever do we now need to reaffirm that faith.

A frontal attack upon the quota system would attract the active, not merely formal support of substantial groups which have not yet seen the sharp relevance to their own position of this legislation. Upon whom do the quotas cast the slur of inferiority? Upon all those whose grandfathers would not have been reckoned fit, under these laws, for admission to the United States. Whose grandfathers? Along with Pat McCarran's grandfather, the grandfathers of millions of Poles and Italians and Jews, and of hundreds of thousands of others who, by their contributions to American life, have earned the right to be counted the equals of the descendants of the Pilgrims. If the issue were presented in these terms, many more would come to see a meaning in it that is now lacking for them.

We have been so often threatened with the epithet "hyphenated American" that we tend to forget that the descendants of immigrants have a right to be heard for what they are. Largely through administrative and judicial rulings in the past forty years, there has been created a presumption that Americans have no direct interest in immigration: the citizen who wishes to bring over a relative has none of the rights of the citizen who wishes to bring over a bale of wool, and it has come to be reckoned indecent, if not disloyal, for an Italian American to express concern over the quota of immigrants from Italy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Only those may speak who do so as "100-per-cent Americans."

Yet any sober consideration of the nature of our past and of the structure of our society exposes the falsity of this view. The Italian American has the right to be heard on these matters precisely *as* an Italian American. The quotas implicitly pass a judgment upon his own place in the United States. Furthermore, his concern as a person with the fate of his relatives in Italy is legitimate and deserves respect. Most important of all, he stands on the same footing as every other individual who voices an opinion on the subject. There are no 100-per-cent Americans, totally divorced from the ties and the biases of their antecedents, above and part from the groups which together make up this nation. In a society which has always taken pride in the diversity of its population, all men have the privilege of influencing the determination of government policy, the offspring of the most recent newcomers no less than the descendants of the settlers of Jamestown.

IN RETROSPECT, it now appears that the campaign for revision of our immigration legislation has been overly solicitous of the prejudices of those who wish to maintain the status quo. Not a few Congressmen would have weighed their votes more carefully had their constituents been awakened to their own personal stake in the outcome. As it was, many groups failed to see the relevance of the McCarran-Walter Bill to their own position; while the responsible leadership was generally alive to its significance, their following was not. Some American Jews, for instance, reckoned that there was no longer any large body of their European coreligionists seeking emigration, and that those who were, would most likely move in the direction of Israel; American policy seemed therefore not to affect them. Although the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People objected to the McCarran Bill, the mass of Negroes had no interest in the matter, some under the delusive belief that more liberal immigration would overstock the market with cheap unskilled labor.

With the issue of principle not clearly drawn, still other groups were misled by the appearance of partial gains or by concern with other measures. M. Masaoka thus spoke for some Japanese Americans, so impressed by elimination of the barred Asiatic zone as to overlook all the unacceptable features of the McCarran Bill. The sponsors of the Celler Bill, among them several Catholic organizations, fell into a similar error; in the hope of securing the admission of 300,000 European refugees in the next three years, they were inclined to minimize their opposition to the McCarran Bill, thinking thus to smooth the way for enactment of their own proposal. What was lacking was the clear assertion of the overriding principle around which all these groups could unite. The principle involved their equal dignity, their equal share in the heritage of America. It is the principle that all men, being brothers, are equally capable of being Americans.

The recent passage of the McCarran-Walter Bill need be no more than a temporary setback. Indeed, by uncovering dramatically the shortcomings of our present laws, it may actually open the way to a significant reformation. This chapter has at least served to demonstrate that the forces struggling to preserve these antiquated laws are so thoroughly out of step with life in the United States today that there can be no compromise with them. Day by day, and throughout the world, events expose the hollowness of the pretensions of 1924. We need only keep clearly before us the historic meaning of America and Americanism, the richness and the strength that spring from our diversities. Then, before too long, a clear appeal on the basis of those very diversities can evoke the protest that will strike from our statute books the laws that are out of keeping with our place in the free world and, above all, with our own character and aspirations.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LIBERAL JUDAISM AS A LIVING FAITH

It Saved the Religious Possibility for Our Generation

ROBERT LANGBAUM

READERS of COMMENTARY will remember the article last year in which David Daiches, son of a Scottish Orthodox rabbi and, at the time, professor of literature at Cornell, assailed American Judaism for having "quietly abolished" from its practice everything distinctively Jewish. Himself an agnostic and assimilationist, Mr. Daiches set before us a pair of rigid alternatives: either we believe in Judaism as uniquely true and observe it the way our fathers and grandfathers did, or else, if we are going to be eclectic and draw truths from a variety of religious and secular traditions, we had better recognize that we are not being Jews at all but liberals and humanists, and accept accordingly an ideal of assimilation. The article caused resentment in liberal Jewish circles, where it was felt that a man in Mr. Daiches' particular glass house had no business throwing a stone at those who, for all their shortcomings, were at least practicing Judaism. Nor did it seem fair to Orthodoxy to invoke its name, not to promote Judaism, but to show the impossibility of remaining Jewish.

As a product of the liberal Judaism under attack, I was much struck by Mr. Daiches' criticism. Liberal Judaism is the only religion I know and yet, Mr. Daiches notwithstanding, I consider myself a committed Jew. More than that, the liberal atmosphere I grew up in seems to me to be pervaded by Judaism—a Judaism made up largely of philanthropies, community projects, and Zionism, a Judaism which Mr. Daiches would not call Judaism but which its adherents at least think is Judaism. At least in their own minds, my parents and their friends are thoroughly committed Jews. I doubt that an Orthodox commitment could be more thorough (while the lack of commitment would be about the same, I should imagine, for those who stay away from liberal as from Orthodox synagogues). It seemed important, therefore, to understand how the thorough commitment of liberal Jews could proceed from a religious and philosophical position that Mr. Daiches showed to be untenable.

I would not myself, however, have undertaken this article were it not that I received an invitation to speak before that same Ithaca congregation addressed by Mr. Daiches and so prominently disapproved of in his article. I have taken advantage of the opportunity to gather thoughts which had long disturbed me and which Mr. Daiches' criticism stirred into awareness. For if his article had an effect more widespread and violent than he had

---

IN AN article in the February 1951 issue of COMMENTARY, David Daiches outlined his reasons for feeling that American Judaism, looked at as a whole, had departed so far from the distinctively Jewish tradition as to be left with virtually no reason for existence—at any rate, with no appeal for Mr. Daiches, son of an Orthodox rabbi. As was to be expected, many of COMMENTARY's readers took issue with Mr. Daiches, and besides a number of letters critical of his article we published two full-length replies, by Leo S. Baeck ("The Task of Being an American Jew," March 1951) and Milton R. Konvitz ("A Letter to David Daiches," May 1951). With the passage of time, interest in the problems raised by Mr. Daiches has waxed rather than waned; and we present here another reply to Mr. Daiches' position by ROBERT LANGBAUM, from the point of view of one who, while brought up in American liberal Judaism and in the Judaism of philanthropy, community projects, and Zionism, would nevertheless refuse to consider himself anything but a thoroughly committed Jew. Mr. Langbaum, a member of the English department at Cornell University (where Mr. Daiches was teaching at the time of the writing of his article), was born in New York City in 1924.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expected—he subtitled it "A Personal View," and afterwards pointed several times to the subtitle by way of defense—it was because he articulated what for many of us had been a long-standing dissatisfaction with liberal Judaism. We were in some fundamental way too much in agreement with Mr. Daiches to let his criticism pass as merely a "personal view." The very anger that greeted his article contained, it seems to me, the recognition that he had touched, even if for inadequate reasons, upon the uncomfortable fact that something is wrong.

We must begin by recognizing two inescapable facts. One, that the American Jewish community exists in a most active and flourishing way. Two, that when critics of Mr. Daiches' persuasion complain about departures in ritual and nomenclature, when they object to the "fancy choir of mixed voices singing elegant extracts from an emasculated Hebrew liturgy," or to "synagogues being called temples," they really mean that the old spirituality has disappeared from Jewish life; and this too is undeniable. The failure of spirituality ought to have been the main object of Mr. Daiches' attack, and it is too bad he obscured it with what amounts to an essentially sentimental literalism. It is too bad for us because the literalist arguments can be met on pragmatic and historical grounds; and we are likely to preen ourselves on adhering to the spirit of the Law when we have to our own satisfaction defended our non-adherence to the letter.

On pragmatic grounds, we need only point to the fact that nevertheless we do live: we have even every right to point to the most vulgarly substantial signs of our existence—the millions raised annually for Jewish causes, the Jewish centers going up in the suburbs, the part we have played in establishing the Jewish state. Such signs say nothing of the value of our accomplishments, but they do indicate that our actions have been determined by our consciousness of being Jews (as distinguished from liberals and humanists), and of standing in a special relation to other Jews. Bertrand Russell has said that when intellectuals question if life be worth living while gardeners feel no doubt of it, it looks as if intellectuals had still something to learn from gardeners; for so long as life seems worth living, worth living it is. The application to Judaism is clear: in the life of communities as of individuals, the will to live is all the justification necessary.

On historical grounds Mr. Daiches left himself wide open to attack by positing a single fixed criterion of *right* practice, a criterion that was, as it turned out, his own nostalgic memory of his father's practice. Modern relativist doctrine aside, the plain fact is that Judaism has changed too much since the time of Abraham for anyone to be able to say where change ought to stop. And since the Dispersion there has not been, even within the same period of time, any uniform practice among Jews all over the world. The assumption that present-day cultural borrowing contaminates what has been until now a pure domestic product runs counter to what we know generally about history, and specifically about Jewish history.

We have learned much about the Babylonian and Greek contribution to the refinement not only of Jewish manners and literature, but of Jewish religious and moral conceptions as well. Nor should we forget that our own two-thousand-year sojourn in the West has probably saved us from sinking into the cultural obscurity of the other Near Eastern peoples. The steady Biblical complaint against foreign influences suggests that the Jews, even in their own country, were prone to cultural borrowing. Then as now the attraction of non-Jewish civilizations seems to have been their superior material and aesthetic culture; then as now borrowing seems to have been the special prerogative of the rich, and to have been associated with social climbing and the desire for increased refinement. Judaism seems to have developed many of its most characteristic doctrines as a reaction against this constant temptation to borrow (to "practice idolatry," which must have stood for a whole complex of cultural requirements); and Jewish development might even be read as an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

increase in self-awareness through the constant necessity to define the Jewish element in what must have been in practice a heterogeneous civilization. Diaspora Judaism as it has come down to us does, it is true, present a monolithic appearance. But that is because separatism won its most complete victory during the Middle Ages, when Judaism had to fight for its life against Christianity. The separatists molded into a single dogmatic rule of life all the conditions that had accrued, whether by accident or design, to the Jews—even those ghetto conditions that were so different from the social conditions of Biblical Judaism and were presumably conditions of bondage. The strategy was brilliant: the Jews preserved their self-esteem by turning the conditions imposed upon them by their enemies—the ghetto garb, the ghetto manners and occupations, the ghetto itself—into defiant marks of distinction.

But today, with the external challenge gone, the kind of Orthodoxy that liberal Jews have rejected would still refuse to separate itself from the ghetto context; it would refuse to separate religious requirements from customs and folkways of the ghetto, particularly the East European ghetto. The task of liberal Judaism has been precisely to make this separation. It has had to do for Judaism what the Reformation and Counter Reformation did for medieval Christianity—adapt it to a new social setting.

It is this social problem, far more than any religious problem, that has caused the rejection of Orthodoxy. The American Jews who rejected Orthodoxy were first of all rejecting a slum culture; they were rejecting an immigrant status and they probably did so before they ever got around to questioning their faith in God or the mission of Israel. Judaism, even Orthodox Judaism, makes few demands on faith and Orthodox observance does not lead to such questioning. The ghetto Jew needs no more faith in God to keep kosher and observe the Sabbath than the ordinary American needs to live hygienically and stay home from work on Sundays—both conform to custom. Liberal Judaism is practiced mainly by Jews for whom the problem is not whether they believe in Judaism—for most of them the question has not come up—but to what extent it can be practiced in the new American middle-class setting.

The distinction is important because it means that liberal Jews are not necessarily agnostics *manqués*. They have not rejected Orthodoxy in the sense that atheists reject religion, or Protestants reject Catholicism. Their adaptation of the old ghetto religion involves no condemnation on principle of what has not lent itself to adaptation. Liberal Judaism cannot be judged against the Orthodoxy of Yiddish culture. It could be fairly judged only against an Orthodoxy—if there is such an Orthodoxy we would want to hear a great deal about it—that is facing up to the same active recognition of the American scene. For there is nothing in liberal Jewish doctrine to preclude a religious revival, as fervent as you like, within the American middle-class setting.

Despite this, Mr. Daiches flatly denied that Judaism can be practiced in this new setting; and though he disclaimed any intention of counseling a return to the ghetto, his emphasis on the irreconcilable contradiction between Judaism and the general American mode of life and thought would certainly suggest the necessity of a spiritual isolation so thorough as to make inevitable the physical isolation of a ghetto. Yet the Jews were not always a confined people isolated from general affairs: the medieval period is in fact exceptional in Jewish history. To find the appropriate historical precedent for a time that boasts both a Jewish state and a free and prosperous Jewish community in America, we must go back beyond the Middle Ages to the period of the Greek and Roman empires when there not only was a Jewish kingdom, but Jews moved freely through the ancient world and the powerful Jewish community of Alexandria occupied a position comparable to ours in America.

The point for us is that Judaism was not always the religion of a subject people who, to preserve it, had to crawl into a hole. The Jews of the ancient world could afford to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

walk with their separateness among the other peoples, confident that they had a central part to play in the destiny of mankind—and as events proved, they did, on a par with the Greeks and Romans. It is perverse to go on associating Judaism with the saddest period of its history, to carry on the wailing and gnashing of teeth when the deliverance so long prayed for has come. Why maintain our separateness when conditions in Israel and the democratic nations make it possible once again to exert Judaism as a positive force in world affairs?

I am reminded in this connection of my visit last summer to the extreme Orthodox quarter of Jerusalem. The streets were squalid and dirty, most of the men wore earlocks and the broad-brimmed black hats and long black coats of the ghetto, everyone spoke Yiddish rather than Hebrew. Those I talked with cursed the government, speaking of it the way their fathers must have spoken of the czar's government—as an alien thing beyond their control or interest. They complained that they were starving, and indeed, in a country crying for workers and farmers, they lived like their fathers in Poland on the margins of the economy, seeming by some mysterious Jewish ingenuity to draw up what living they had from the ghetto stones. In a country remarkable for its sunburnt vigorous people, these men looked as though they had never seen the sun; the children were pale, dirty, and rachitic. Some little boys in earlocks and big black hats, coming out from a long day in the Talmud Torah, spat at me and called me *goy*, pointing out with derision my lack of earlocks. Here were people jealously guarding their separateness and their misery —in the heart of Jerusalem. For them, the Holy Land had become not Palestine at all but the dark and fetid ghettos of Poland.

THERE can, I think, be no question of the right to make changes in Judaism. The question is with the kind of changes that have been made; and here we must return to Mr. Daiches' criticism. His subtitle, "A Personal View," indicates that his criticism rested fundamentally upon *taste*; and after we have cleared away, at least to our own satisfaction, his arguments, we have still to face the fact that a sensitive foreign observer has found us *unattractive*.

The interesting thing is that Mr. Daiches found us unattractive for many of the same reasons that Europeans find Americans unattractive and certain intellectuals find the middle classes everywhere unattractive. Mr. Daiches has judged American Judaism, not only by comparison with the religion of his boyhood, but also by categories that have come to be conventional in the anti-middle-class criticism of the last hundred years. In objecting to English instead of Hebrew or Yiddish nomenclature, or to "fancy" choirs, he was objecting to that displacement of religion by gentility which Santayana pointed out as an American middle-class phenomenon. And in objecting to the belief that Judaism can be "prettied up into a modern mixture of Jefferson and Freud," he was objecting to the easy optimism and false tolerance that come from an indifference to intellectual and moral distinctions: he was objecting to that evasion of non-material realities—of what in literary circles is called "the tragic sense of life"—for which the middle class has been so often castigated.

Mr. Daiches has made that identification of Jews with the middle class, and especially the American middle class, which by critics of a different bent has been made in order to launch an attack against all three. I am thinking particularly of the kind of modern literary anti-liberalism and anti-Semitism that begins with reasoned criticism in Eliot for example, and ends with a call for pogroms in Pound. There has been at work in the 20th century a peculiar gradation of symbols by which the middle class stands for all that is wrong with modern culture, only more so; the Americans stand for all that is wrong with the middle class, only more so; and the Jews stand for all that is wrong with the Americans and the middle class, only much more so. By assuring us that American Jews are no worse as regards religious "pussyfooting" than their Christian neighbors, Mr. Daiches car-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ried the gradation of culpability only as far as the Americans. But it is interesting to note that where the literary anti-Semites have made the distinction between Orthodox and liberal Jews, they have like him preferred the former.

Quite clearly Mr. Daiches does not share the anti-liberal, anti-middle-class ideology. But he does, like most literary men nowadays, share its aesthetic. Modern taste developed largely as a reaction against Victorian taste and as part of the general 20th-century reaction against middle-class ideology. It is therefore natural that the leaders of modern taste should have been those anti-liberals who not only, as it happened, made the best poets and novelists, but had also the advantage of an ideology consistent with their taste. Those of us who have tried, on the other hand, to maintain a liberal position, have had to resolve a conflict of ideology and taste—for in taste there is a surprising unanimity among people of any literary culture at all.

Modern taste finds the middle class unattractive because of a certain gracelessness and lack of profundity, an awkward quality in its life. The awkwardness is probably attributable to that break with tradition by which the middle class came to power and which is at the heart of its ideology. By abolishing divine and historic sanction for values, the middle class has been thrown into a total reliance upon the conscious intellect. It has been in the position of the tennis player who tries to play the whole game by a conscious application of the rules at every moment. The connoisseur of tennis condemns such a player as awkward; and the aesthetic judgment is anything but frivolous, it involves both a moral and a pragmatic judgment. In the same way, we have that significant body of modern fiction in which Americans who are confronted with traditional European civilization, or middle-class Europeans who are confronted with the noble gravity of unenlightened peasants or primitives, are shown to lack composure, to be by comparison "sore thumbs," out of tune with themselves and life's fundamental rhythms.

This is the aesthetic Mr. Daiches brought to bear; and it is not difficult to see how, if Europeans can be condemned for untraditionalism, Americans might stand twice condemned, and American Jews three times condemned. For Jews have had to make two migrations: one, away from the ghetto tradition, the other *to* the general Western revolt against Christian and classical tradition. What has been for Christians the merely vestigial position they found themselves in after the Enlightenment, has been for Jews a positive *code* of attitudes and manners to be learned like any other. Besides, there has been in the Jewish commitment to liberalism a special earnestness: liberalism has been, after all, our "bread and butter," our one door into the Western world and in America into the middle class. All this may explain why Jews have offered such a tempting target for attacks on liberalism.

Moreover, upon the Jews themselves, the need for an unremitting self-consciousness has had a disintegrating effect, and may account for a good deal of self-distrust, turning in extreme cases to guilt and self-hatred. We are made uneasy, for example, by the graceless privilege of having to decide how far to go in maintaining our connection with tradition. Is it enough to go to synagogue on holidays and omit daily prayers? Is it enough to cut the service to two hours, or one, or just to settle for a "stimulating" sermon with a hymn on either side? Is it enough to eat kosher at home but *treyfe* outside, or is it not enough simply to obey the Golden Rule? Such alternatives show us as unattractive, not because we tamper with tradition, but because they show us as interested in moving toward a lesser strenuousness. Our reforms embarrass us because we know we have made them not to promote a higher spirituality, but in order to get by with as little spirituality as possible.

But even where they have chosen to exert a greater strenuousness than their fathers conceived of—I mean in their philanthropic endeavors—liberal Jews are unattractive. That is because the high-powered, impersonal, modern philanthropy exercises no refining

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

influence upon the character. It calls upon the same faculties, the same externalization of thought and energy required in making a living: it is in fact business for a "good cause." The accountant who adds up figures all day in the office spends his evenings going over the accounts of the Jewish center or of his fund-raising committee. The restaurateur is called upon to arrange the fund-raising dinner, the advertising man does the publicity for it, the lawyer makes the appeal for funds. Such activities have multiplied in our liberal Jewish communities until they usurp all a man's spare time and energy; and since the cause is always "good," the hustling and haggling actually pass for a religious life. Thus the Economic Man, instead of finding in Judaism the other side of his nature, becomes more lopsided than ever.

Worst of all is the danger of second-rateness, which threatens liberal Judaism as it must any attempt to tailor a tradition to our needs. The danger is that we pull the tradition down to our level and then forget that there is any level higher than ours. This, again, is a sin the middle class has been particularly accused of: the epithet "philistine" refers to it, to the ignorance of the half-educated who cannot conceive how a knowledge they do not have can be worth having. Liberal Judaism is catering to this kind of ignorance when rabbis make sermons out of newspapers and best-selling novels in order, as the phrase goes, to give their congregations what they want. I know of one rabbi who circulated questionnaires on which the congregation were to indicate what changes they wanted made in the service and what kind of sermons they wanted to hear. This seems good democratic procedure, but what can it accomplish except to confirm the congregation in what must surely be—at least compared to the summits of traditional wisdom that the rabbi has it in his power to bring them—their intellectual and moral second-rateness?

Nor does such procedure make possible the old-fashioned scolding sermon. The high admonitory style of the prophets has disappeared from the liberal pulpit; it is "undemocratic." Afraid to discourage those Jews who do attend services, your liberal rabbi reserves his admonitions for the anti-Semites and the Jews who do not attend. Or if he does make criticisms applicable to the congregation, they are so generalized or so minor as merely to lend piquancy to a complacent self-righteousness. "We encourage each other in mediocrity," as Charles Lamb said.

That may be why so few intellectuals can make a place for themselves in liberal congregations. They are no better morally than other people, but they have acquired certain critical standards; they have had instilled into them some dim notion of the first-rate. Of people who are morally superior, who are extraordinarily gifted for the religious life, I need hardly speak—only imagine a saint as a so-called "active" member of a liberal congregation! Yet it is a grave criticism of a religious community that there could be no place in it for a saint. But there is really, as things now stand, no place in our liberal congregations for anyone who, whether by choice or necessity, cannot live according to the routine assumptions of the middle class.

I HAVE tried, in answer to Mr. Daiches, to distinguish the important from the merely quibbling case against liberal Judaism, and to account for that case. What case, then, can be made for liberal Judaism?

The case for it must come down in the end to a case for religion. I assume that religion is no mere historical phenomenon rendered obsolete since the Enlightenment, but a permanently inherent human need. Mr. Daiches, on the other hand, having found the old articles of faith difficult to "stomach," has given up religion altogether to turn instead—to what?—to culture, to "the Western heritage," which he has come at through a study of great books of which the Bible is one. About the existence of the religious need, there can, of course, be no arguing; one can only consult one's own inner experience. One can wonder, however, what would become of the Western heritage if all the Catholics, Protestants, and Jews were to give up their ancestral traditions to turn to it. Since the Western heritage includes these traditions,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it would be a little like cutting down the oak, the maple, and the elm in order to have just trees. The Western heritage would in fact become what Mr. Daiches would make of Judaism—a thing of the past, a history of the time when there *were* Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. If we are eventually to have a culture without present religious distinctions, it will not be made in mid-air but out of the particular ground we now stand upon. It will grow from whatever in the Western heritage is still alive among us. Among American Jews the thing that is still alive is the need that seeks satisfaction through some connection with Judaism—even if through raising funds. It is the need that still draws Jews, for all their modernizing, to the synagogue—even if to hear the "stimulating" sermon. There remains a difference, after all, between the sermon heard as a Jew and among Jews, and the current-events lecture at the high school auditorium.

This is, if you like, a retreat to the sorriest minimum of religious requirement. But in adapting the old religion to a new social setting—and one inhospitable to the religious life—liberal Judaism has had to start over again from the beginning, from the line where commitment begins. The religious need is at least real; it lives, as witnessed by the fact that the Jewish community lives. And given the need, everything is possible. The case for liberal Judaism must in the end rest upon the extent to which it has kept alive the religious need by institutionalizing and cultivating it, and the extent to which it will in future realize the possibilities of religious development.

A MODERN American poet has described his art as one in which you prepare yourself for a poem to happen, in which you expose yourself to inspiration, while having made sure beforehand to acquire the techniques for making the most of that inspiration when it comes. In a half-believing age, liberal Judaism might, I think, conceive as its task that of preparing us against the day in our personal or collective lives when we encounter an ultimate, which is to say a religious, situation. If we have been cultured in religion, we will in such a situation understand what we are feeling and know how to turn to account emotions which might otherwise destroy us.

To show what I mean, let me conclude by referring again to an experience in Jerusalem last summer. I encountered an ultimate situation in the dark underground chamber on Mount Zion, where the Israelis are preparing a memorial of the six million dead in Europe. On exhibit were European Torahs desecrated in numberless ingenious ways, urns of ashes from the crematoria, and in a small glass cabinet some cakes of a brownish soap made from the bodies of Jews.

The soap was my ultimate situation. Not only did I feel myself literally in it—the fat from my body, my words, thoughts, feelings, all were in it—but the soap carried to its last grim conclusion the denial of human spirituality. Every living instinct rises in protest against such denial, but it is difficult, detached and random as we are, to find the applicable vocabulary of protest: and it is impossible to find a ritual of protest. Unrationalized and without a vent for them, our wild and helpless feelings can turn against us, bearing out the grim external testimony and reducing us to ultimate zero. There was, however, inscribed on the wall above the cabinet the Hebrew statement of faith in the resurrection of the dead; and there were prayer books open to the *kaddish*. I covered my head and read aloud the inscription and the *kaddish*. They provided the vocabulary of protest, and they provided something to *do* about what I was feeling, something around which my feelings could organize to emerge, ranked and phalanxed, as one stalwart energy of self-assertion.

The point is that, an American and a liberal, I had sufficient Hebrew and sufficient religious training to have responded just that way, rather than another. If you consider that, given the choice between Orthodoxy or nothing, I'd have had nothing—you will have made out, provided of course that you *want* religion, the best case for liberal Judaism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BEHIND THE "ANTI-AMERICANISM" OF MR. BEVAN

How Far Will It Take Him — and British Labor?

GEORGE LICHTHEIM

LONDON

THE leaders of the British Labor party have reason to feel thankful these days that the preferential primary is no part of Britain's political usage. If it were, the task of naming the party's next standard-bearer would be an easy one. Aneurin Bevan has gained so much ground in recent months, even among the trade union hierarchy, that next October's Labor party conference seems likely to witness the once improbable spectacle of the Old Guard trying to make peace with him on his own terms more or less. If anything can prevent him from swamping the conference, it is the bloc vote of certain major unions whose leadership remains loyal to the official policy. In a "beauty contest" among party members, as distinct from union members, he would sweep the board, and it is by no means certain that the electorate would turn him down if given the chance to choose between him and the Tories.

This of course is an academic issue for the moment, since nothing short of an earthquake will dislodge Mr. Churchill from No. 10 Downing Street, and while he remains there Labor will in all probability continue to be led by Mr. Attlee. But it shows which way the wind is blowing. A year ago, even six months ago, the big question was whether Mr. Bevan would be expelled from the Labor party, and if so, how many rebels, if any, would join him in the wilderness. Today one asks whether he will carry the next Labor party conference with him, or be balked just short of his goal.

In all likelihood Bevan will be supported by at least two of the "Big Five" unions—the engineering and railwaymen's—plus several of the smaller unions (of which the electrical workers' is still Communist-led). He is gaining ground among the miners—the third largest of the "Big Five"—and is being firmly opposed only by the entrenched leadership of the two mammoth unions: the transport workers (Ernest Bevin's old supporters) and the municipal and "general" employees. Both are among the worst paid, and it will be surprising if their leadership holds out for long under the kind of economic pressure now building up.

Assuming that this shaky structure holds, the Old Guard can just—but only just—hope to carry the day next October, but at the cost of alienating the "divisional Labor parties," i.e., the 625 constituency organizations upon whose zeal and efficiency Labor's election chances depend. Their membership, about a million strong, is overwhelmingly Bevanite in sentiment, if nonetheless, paradoxically and illogically, loyal to Attlee so long as he remains at the head of the party—and so long as he avoids an open split!

Circumstances thus point towards a compromise, probably expressed in what the French call *"une résolution nègre-blanc,"* that is, the kind of platform to which all factions can subscribe. That indefatigable go-between, Hugh Dalton, who has already

---

ANEURIN BEVAN, who in the event of a Labor victory might yet be the next Prime Minister of Britain, is a bewildering figure. A militant socialist, a vigorous anti-Communist (who criticized Churchill during the war for being too amiable to Stalin!), he has recently emerged as the leader of a political tendency with strong "neutralist" and "anti-American" sentiments. Here, GEORGE LICHTHEIM reports from London on what makes Bevan run—and why he is running off in this particular direction. Mr. Lichtheim is a frequent contributor to this magazine; his most recent article was "Britain's Prospects under Churchill" in the December 1951 issue. He is a member of the editorial staff of the British monthly *The Twentieth Century*.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reversed his party's stand on German rearmament, may be expected to play a leading role in such a transaction. But those who should know are inclined to believe that the tide runs too strongly towards Bevan for a compromise to be lasting unless it gives him the substance of what he wants: effective control of Labor's policy, if not the formal leadership for which he knows himself to be as yet unready. He is undoubtedly sincere when he says that he will never challenge Attlee for the leadership. But Attlee is sixty-nine, Morrison is sixty-six and ailing, and Bevan—who is only fifty-four and extremely hale—will look like the ideal standard-bearer by the time the next election comes round, say in two or three years. Cripps, the only man who could have stopped him, is dead.

THE factors making for this drift are many and most of them are obvious: pacifism, rearmament strains, Conservative unpopularity, and the stodginess of Labor's Old Guard. What is perhaps less obvious is Mr. Bevan's ability to capitalize on this situation. Hitherto he has played his cards well, and if he goes on avoiding major mistakes he will come within hailing distance of power. The question is: what kind of leader, and especially what kind of statesman in administration, is he going to turn out to be?

No one can safely try to answer this question by taking as his text Mr. Bevan's recently published semi-autobiographical tract for the times, *In Place of Fear* (Simon and Schuster). This is a curious piece of work, which over large stretches gives the impression of having been dictated in a hurry and then laid aside and forgotten. Its publication was something of an anticlimax: the ogre turned out to be surprisingly mild-mannered, introspective, and somewhat old-fashioned in his use of political clichés. One had been led to expect a call to action; what one got was a badly organized essay ruminating on a variety of topics in a style not calculated to raise anyone's blood pressure. Its author clearly has an imaginative cast of mind and a considerable stock of information; he is civilized—he even quotes Stendhal; he is a democratic socialist who distrusts Russia and has not much use for American capitalism, though he is favorable to American democracy; he is emotionally a pacifist and a Little Englander, who yet realizes that Britain cannot stand alone; he knows where the present world danger comes from, but has no intention of meeting trouble halfway; he is rather inclined to imagine that if you have a perfect social system, you probably don't need to rearm. So far, so good, or rather, not so good—especially the last point. But what does it all add up to in terms of policy?

The answer is that it adds up to one practical recommendation and a good deal of wishful thinking. The practical advice—which most people here, Conservatives included, wish they could follow—can be summed up simply: be firm with the Americans; don't get rattled by talk that the United States may withdraw into isolation; America needs us as much as we need her, and if we take a firm line we can still make our influence felt, even if for the moment we are not solvent. This kind of advice is not altogether wasted on the personnel of the late Labor government, whose timidity in this respect has already been shown up by Mr. Churchill's success in getting away with a much firmer line. But it is not sufficient to constitute a policy. Not even when mixed with strident demands for a gigantic Point Four program—with America paying.

It is all very well for Mr. Bevan and his supporters to stress the need to help the backward countries, but they must know that (a) this is no substitute for a short-term defense policy, which remains essential on other grounds; (b) if regarded as a long-term project—which it is—it can only be undertaken by the United States. They do in fact know this, but try to evade the issue by establishing a claim to some specifically socialist remedy for the world's ills. Their argument is that only British (read: Labor) "pressure" can prevent the Americans from perverting the projected world plan for mutual aid into a drive to produce more strategic raw materials.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thus we are led to regard as the core of the whole Bevanite program in foreign affairs a claim to some special recipe for dragging the "backward" countries out of their misery, by a suitable marriage of American (capitalist) technology and British (socialist) policy. And this is where the wishful thinking comes in, for the whole scheme boils down to giving America good advice about how to invest her surplus capital. Now this is not an entirely useless occupation, but to pretend that British Labor can build a socialist future in the role of a "kibitzer" in world affairs is really going a little far. Unfortunately this is what the "grand design," stripped of Mr. Michael Foot's and his collaborators' grandiose phraseology, comes down to in cold fact. Compared with this disingenuous nonsense, the Conservative mystique of Empire seems positively hardheaded.

The confusion, however, does not end there, for in addition to demanding a greatly stepped-up program for industrializing the backward countries, Mr. Bevan by a kind of afterthought adds a warning against "burning up" the raw-material reserves of the planet at too fast a rate, lest in a few years we all reach the point of "watching each other starve through expensive television sets." Faced with these and similar contradictions, some critics have tended to write off both the book and the author as hopelessly muddleheaded. It would be truer to say that there is an unresolved contradiction in his mind which at times makes him a puzzle even to his friends.

Intellectually, Mr. Bevan is on the side of "Progress," including the fastest possible rate of industrialization—for other countries. Thus, he complacently welcomes the pace of industrialization in Russia (on the grounds that highly skilled workers and technicians will not permanently put up with an autocratic form of government), while deploring its effects in Britain, and hinting rather strongly that industrial civilization is responsible for most of the world's ills. Emotionally, he hates both progress and civilization. There are times when he sounds almost like a conservative—in the European, not the American, sense of the term, i.e., one who defends the pre-industrial tradition. He certainly detests liberalism, with its cult of efficiency and all-round mechanization, and has been known to say privately that if the only choice were between capitalism and the Middle Ages, he would plump for the latter. He dismisses the *Ersatz* medievalism of Franco and Salazar as a sham, but his real hatred is reserved for "Manchester" and all that Manchester stands for.

This is socialism all right—the socialism of Ruskin and Morris (and there is more than a hint of it in Marx, whom Mr. Bevan acclaims as his teacher). It is a socialism built upon resentment, not merely class resentment—though there is plenty of that in Mr. Bevan's psychological make-up—but resentment against everything that has happened in Britain since the Industrial Revolution. It is, in the precise sense of the term, a reaction against the upheaval—some would call it the disaster—that the Industrial Revolution brought about. This form of socialism is not exactly to the taste of the tough managerial politicians who dominate the Labor party's right wing, yet Cripps, who epitomized their creed, was also the personal friend and political ally of Aneurin Bevan. The fact is that Labor cannot do without the kind of inspiration which the British left has always drawn from its frequently romantic vision of both the future and the past.

THERE is, however, something to be said, on strictly factual grounds, for the Bevanite attitude. It is generally agreed that British industry must be made more efficient, and that there never was a time when British socialists could less afford to neglect the problem of productivity. But there is a curious silence on such questions as craftsmanship in industry, or the effects of excessive urbanization.

The fact is that the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century was paid for in Britain—and in Britain alone—by an upheaval which came near to destroying agriculture and the traditional crafts. Both have survived, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only just. A comparison with other European countries discloses the significant fact that those which today are most prosperous are also distinguished by the retention of the traditional craft basis in industry. It is no accident that Sweden and Switzerland are at the top of the ladder, that Germany is fast regaining her export markets, and that Belgium is prosperous despite some structural unemployment. France, but for her political misfortunes, would soon rank in the same class. In all these countries, industrialization has been a comparatively slow and organic affair, and has consequently left fewer scars and resentments than it did in Britain.

Revolutions can be ruinous, and industrial revolutions are no exception. Britain is not merely over-urbanized and over-industrialized, but over-industrialized in the wrong way. Her factories produce too many textile goods for export to vanishing overseas markets, and too little of the high-grade mechanical and electrical equipment on which Sweden and Switzerland have built their astonishing prosperity. There are admittedly some economic problems common to all European countries, and notably to those cursed with a heritage of colonial possession and consequent dependence upon exports of textiles and other cheap staples. But these problems tend to find their most concentrated expression in Britain, and socialists of Mr. Bevan's persuasion cannot wholly be blamed for feeling that they have entered upon an unlucky inheritance. When, in addition, a large millstone, in the form of an outsize rearmament program, is tied round their necks, it is scarcely surprising if at times a note almost of desperation creeps into their discourse.

Once the matter is viewed in this perspective, it becomes clearer, not merely why Mr. Bevan resigned from the Labor government, but why his resignation very nearly split the party. To say that he was emotionally distressed by petty cuts in the health service is only part of the story, and a part of lesser importance. Genuine economic issues were involved, as has since been made clear by the Conservative government's decision to scale down the defense program. It may or may not be true that Mr. Ernest Bevin committed the cabinet to a fantastically high estimate of what Britain could do, in order to cheer the Europeans, but it is no longer much of a secret that the announcement of the original British rearmament program took Washington by surprise and produced some off-the-record doubts about her ability to execute such an ambitious scheme.

Yet all this would have mattered less if the Labor party had not begun to feel dejected about the country's economic position generally, and about the efficacy of the so-called planning methods applied since 1945. The willingness to shoulder burdens comes easier if there is confidence that one is on the right road. The Labor party has lacked such confidence since 1950, and is today no longer in a mood to give *carte blanche* to the old leadership which dominated the 1945-51 government. It is not quite ready yet to put its trust in Mr. Bevan, but will in the end accept him if no serious competitor turns up. At the moment, his worst handicap is the inadequacy of the people who surround him, and his own apparent tendency to seek advice in the wrong quarters. But the dearth of talent is as marked among his opponents, and some of the abler left-of-center figures are quietly moving towards his camp. The present undercurrent being what it is, he has only to wait.

WE KNOW what Mr. Bevan is like in opposition. What would he be like as head of a government? Probably a great deal more reasonable than he now seems, say those who know him best. One must hope so, for his recent public statements have in some instances displayed not merely vagueness about facts but an awkward misjudgment of what the facts mean.

To take the most conspicuous instance of all: he still goes about repeating that Russia's inadequate steel output is by itself a sufficient guarantee of peace. He made a point of that in his book, when he wrote that "a steel production of 30 million tons

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

per annum, servicing a population of more than 200 millions, provides no basis for blitzkrieg methods of war"; and at the press conference he gave when the book appeared in print, he similarly declared he did not think that "35 million tons of steel [apparently including the satellites] would launch themselves against 200 million"—itself an excessive figure. On this whole subject, his views, as the Manchester *Guardian* remarked, "are notable for their divorce from reality." The fact is that 30 million tons per annum are ample for war-making, especially when there is a prospect of quickly annexing the whole production of Western Europe as well. But even without the Ruhr, present Russian output will go a long way. Germany, with much less than 30 million, came near to conquering the world. It has been calculated that a Soviet output of 10,000 tanks, 10,000 105-millimeter howitzers, 5,000 4.5-inch guns, 50 submarines of 1,250 tons, and 10,000 aircraft (including 4,000 bombers) would require less than a million tons of ingot steel. In 1943, at the height of the struggle with Hitler, Russia produced slightly less than 10 million tons of steel, and that was quite enough to maintain an annual output of 40,000 planes, 30,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, and masses of other arms.

Now all these figures are on record, as is the fact that, together with its satellites, the Soviet Union disposes of almost 40 million tons of steel annually, which is five million more than Hitler had at the height of his power, when he had overrun most of Europe. There is thus no excuse for talking nonsense about Russia's steel shortage, but nonsense is what Mr. Bevan and his acolytes have been talking nonetheless. To say that they are in good faith is merely to affirm that there are some subjects on which they prefer to remain ignorant.

The matter might be put differently by saying that the Bevanites continue to believe in the existence and practicability of something called "a socialist foreign policy." They reason that, since British foreign policy in the 19th century was manifestly guided by such "abstract"—but highly practical—notions as the desirability of spreading constitutional government and free trade around the globe, why not peace and socialism now? The true answer, of course, is that Britain has not the strength to enforce these policies; she can hope only to influence the United States in the right direction. Faced with this uncomfortable fact, the more utopian left-wingers cast around for a "third force" position. Thus, Mrs. Barbara Castle, who sits with Mr. Bevan on the Labor party executive, recently told a Fabian audience that it was a terrible thing for British Labor to be lined up with imperialist America against "the working-class governments" of Russia and Eastern Europe. She was, of course, quite sure that the Marshall Plan had no object beyond helping America to get rid of surplus consumer goods.

The interest of such remarks lies in the fact that Mrs. Castle is probably a shade more intelligent and better informed than the average member of the Labor party. When one asks what kind of leadership Mr. Bevan is going to supply, one asks in fact whether he will eventually get rid of the bodyguard of mediocrities and sentimentalists who currently surround him. It would be pleasant to be able to answer this question in the affirmative, but the fact is that no one knows.

IT MUST be conceded that U.S. foreign policy, even as represented by the present State Department, makes it needlessly difficult for realistic Labor party experts on foreign affairs, as represented by Denis Healey, to stem the tide of Bevanism. It is also extremely difficult for moderate socialists here to take American unofficial liberalism seriously when they come across such productions as the recent Americans for Democratic Action publication, *The Only War We Seek*—with its solemn offer to the Chinese to teach them the elements of Confucianism in preference to Western democratic concepts! What is one to make of "liberals" who argue in all seriousness that Communism must be opposed because it is a menace to—guess what?—the subhuman

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Asiatic family system (which Asiatic religion merely validates) with its treatment of women and children as beasts of burden! Faced with such abysmal imbecility—don't these liberal Machiavellians know that feminine emancipation is Communism's biggest trump card in the East?—one feels inclined to give the battle up for lost before it has started.

If this is American liberalism, what are the American conservatives like? Apparently they are either like Taft or like Eisenhower. Neither stirs much enthusiasm here, though Eisenhower is naturally more popular in official circles. The fact must be faced that since the dissolution of the Rooseveltian "mystique," America has ceased to mean much to the ordinary person here. Marshall Aid, gracelessly proffered and sulkily received, is no substitute for a common purpose. Proposals for a "crusade" to liberate the Iron Curtain countries rouse alarm; evidence of a tendency to hog all military top commands provokes resentment. There is not much cordiality in the Atlantic alliance at the moment, and Bevanism feeds upon this sentiment, or lack of sentiment, among many others.

The average Labor party supporter does not take the Communist hate campaign against America seriously; he merely wishes Britain were more independent, and not compelled to rearm. When on top of his various grudges he is told that there is really no need for massive rearmament, he naturally listens. And when the socialist intelligentsia, who more or less provide his mental food, encourage him in his native dislike of foreigners, he needs no further stimulus for throwing his support to Bevan. Once let the notion sink in that "we are being pushed around" and that Bevan "wants to stand up to the Americans," and the rest is a formality.

In the long run, Labor is a democratic party. It may take time, but in the end the man whom the ordinary party member wants is bound to come to the top. Bevan is nearly there. Paradoxically, his presence at the head of the party, and possibly at the head of the next Labor government, might turn out a blessing for the Atlantic cause, since he is by now practically invulnerable to the charge of warmongering or unreasoned hostility to Russia, and his vague program of "appeasement" would probably dissolve into a few empty gestures; there is no reason to doubt his strong and basic anti-Communism. But that is looking ahead. For the moment, his progress is adding to the stresses under which the Atlantic alliance is laboring.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE OLD DAYS IN DUBLIN

Some Girlhood Recollections of the 90's

JESSIE S. BLOOM

OUR home was in Windsor Terrace on the banks of the Grand Canal, opposite Portobello Barracks. The Terrace had six houses, built about 1850, with gardens in front, and during my childhood the opposite side of the canal was lined with trees. The horse-drawn barges were one of the features of the place, and also there was a bridle path constantly used by Dublin ladies and gentlemen, and by the officers and men stationed at the barracks. On our side of the canal, the trees had been cut down, though there were several fine trees in the gardens of the homes. The whole place had a lovely peaceful atmosphere, with its green lawns, the dirt roads, and the clear water of the canal. I used to think, when I saw the barge families eating their meals on deck or hanging out their washing, that the acme of luxury would be to live on a canal barge. The canal folks seemed to belong to another world. Our closest contact with them came when we walked to the lock at Rathmines Bridge, about five blocks from home, and watched them lower the gate to let the barges through. As the barge pushed its way through the lock, it was possible to step from the bank onto the barge and cross to the other side, and we always watched for a chance to do that; somehow, crossing on the barge was more exciting than merely going over the bridge.

It seemed we always kept open house, and there was a constant stream of people passing through Dublin, mostly from Russia, and many of them would stop over at our home. The talk was always intellectual—arguments about the newest political ideas, socialism, agnosticism, etc., with the main topic Russia. Many of the men who stopped over were refugees from Russian persecution, and one of my earliest memories is of a conversation I had with one of the refugees, a young man named Jacob who was on his way to America. I was a youngster of about nine or ten, and he was trying to tell me how unjust they were in Russia. "They would put you in jail for saying to hell with the Czar!" And then, as if to emphasize his freedom in Dublin, he kept repeating, "To hell with the Czar!" I listened spellbound, and asked questions, and I got the idea from what he told me that there was a frontier between Russia and the free world, and if one could get out of Russia into the free world, one would be safe. It all formed a sort of hazy picture in my mind, and I used to dream of a time when I could go to Russia and stand with one foot in the free world and the other in Russia, and shout, "To hell with the Czar!" My cousin Max was taking piano lessons at that time, and this particular visitor would pay him a penny for playing the "Marseillaise." Max had to play it six times for a penny, and Jacob would sing and sing and sing. He seemed to get a satisfaction from it that we children could not comprehend, but it did give us a kind of appreciation of our freedom.

The struggle for existence was pretty hard, and my father had many occupations. First he used to sell milk, and later he acted as an agent to an agent who sold steamship tickets.

JESSIE S. BLOOM, who here reminisces of a Jewish girlhood in Ireland, was born in Dublin in 1887. In 1912 she married Robert Bloom, "also an Irish Litvak," who had settled in Fairbanks, Alaska, during the Gold Rush. The Blooms lived in Fairbanks from 1912 to 1928, with one interruption of two years in Seattle, Washington, and a two-year visit to Dublin by Mrs. Bloom during the First World War. Mr. and Mrs. Bloom went again to Dublin in 1928, this time with their four daughters, "in order to give the girls a Jewish background." That visit lasted nine years, the family returning to Fairbanks in 1937. Not long ago the Blooms once more moved to Seattle, where they are living now. Mrs. Bloom organized and directed the first kindergarten established in Fairbanks, and was one of the organizers of the Alaskan Girl Scouts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There were so many people passing through on their way to South Africa, Australia, and America, that the agent from the shipping company found it worthwhile to let Father have a commission for any Jews he introduced to him, and who purchased the tickets from his office. Mr. Bates was the name of the agent. Rather an appropriate name, as we used to call the Gentiles "Betzim" in Ireland. Mother had a theory that they came to be called this because the Hebrew word for egg is *betzah* and of course the Yiddish word for eggs is *eyer,* or Eire, so there it is, *eyer,* Ireland, *betzah,* "Betzim"—figure that one out.

In arranging for the passage of the emigrants from Ireland to America, it was necessary to make sure that they could show evidence of having some money with them, and many a poor emigrant arrived in the States with a check of Father's to show to the immigration authorities. I met some folks in Chicago, forty years later, who told me that they had arrived in the States with one of Father's checks.

ANOTHER of Father's businesses was helping folks get their naturalization papers in order. Mother was very useful to him in that occupation, for she was very well educated and spoke English fluently within a comparatively short time after her arrival in Dublin. She told me that she learned English by reading the newspaper; I believe it was the *Irish Times.* It happened that shortly after Father got his naturalization papers, he met with some Jewish people who had just arrived and needed help in filling out the necessary papers. Since Father and Mother had just gone through this process, they were able to help, and after that they did it for others, charging a very small fee, much less than what one had to pay a solicitor. There were a few of our Gentile friends whom Father used to call in to testify that they had known the various applicants for citizenship. There was great satisfaction in this little sideline, and I can still remember with what joy Father would come and report that so-and-so had been granted his papers.

Both the shipping agency and the naturalization agency were occupations that made our home a sort of unofficial immigrant center. Mother's help was also sought very frequently for writing letters, since she could write in four languages: Yiddish, German, Russian, and English. As she told us, she came by that job naturally—her father had been known in Shavel as Avrom der Shreiber, since he was a lawyer and wrote many letters for those who needed it. He died when Mother was sixteen, and she kept up his work, writing letters for the villagers until she left for Ireland.

Mother also acted as agent in getting the Yiddish papers from abroad, and so people gathered in our home to read them, and as a result they formed a sort of literary circle, which has flourished all through the years; the present Social and Literary Club in Dublin is an outgrowth of that. They had interesting discussions in that group. Mother spoke on women's suffrage about sixty-five years ago, and there was quite an exciting debate after her talk. Irish politics also played a prominent part in the discussions; politics was quite a problem for the Jews, who basically were loyal to the British when feeling against England was at its highest.

The *Jewish Chronicle* of London was as much a part of our Friday night service as the *Kiddush.* We always spoke of it as the Organ and we read it from front to back, starting with the notices of births, marriages, and deaths on the front page, then reading and discussing the editorials, and sometimes there would be a piece by Zangwill. I have a hazy recollection of one of Zangwill's poems that greatly tickled us. It was about "Englishkeit," and I seem to remember one line that said, "Fried fish on Friday night is what we call English Yiddishkeit." We also eagerly followed the development of the Dreyfus case in the pages of the *Chronicle,* carefully going over each phase of the evidence; in those days Esterhazy was as much cursed among the Jews as Hitler is today.

FATHER acquired a secondhand printing press and some type in the early 90's and set up as a job printer in a modest way, using a room in our home as an office. (He later moved uptown and at the present time the office is still being run by my brother.)

The printing office further broadened our contacts, and many of my earliest memories are of running errands in connection with that business. Most of the Jews in Dublin at that time were in the business of selling goods on weekly installments, so Father de-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

signed a card to take care of the needs of those engaged in that business. It was a manila card folded in half, and on one side was printed the name of the proprietor, his occupation, usually a "General Draper," with his address, and also a space to record the amount that was to be paid weekly, and on the inside there was space for keeping a record of payments for a year. I remember very clearly the pleasure that would come over the countenance of some newly arrived immigrant when he received these business cards with his name printed in English and the announcement that he was a General Draper; I think the word "General" fascinated many of them.

Since most of the Jewish population lived in the same district, around the South Circular Road, I would walk to deliver the printing, always making the same speech: "My father sent me with the cards, and he wants the three and sixpence please." Once, after I went through this little speech, the old man to whom I was delivering the cards was not satisfied to take the parcel; nothing would do but I must come into the house, and then he opened the package and proceeded to count the cards one by one. Fortunately for me, there were two extra, which I promptly took, and then he said he would not pay me unless I gave him the two extra, and I gave them to him. I found out later that Father knew his customers, and those who might be mean enough to count the cards were always given a few more, whereas the "gentlemen" were given the exact amount. It struck me at the time as a queer twist of justice, but then lots of things were inexplicable to me at ten years old.

The only spanking I remember ever getting was in connection with the delivery of some printing. I conceived the idea that if I had a lot of coins the money would appear more, and when I was paid in three single shillings and one sixpence, I would call into one of the shops on my way home and get change of a shilling; sometimes I would get two silver sixpences and sometimes all coppers, and often the shopkeeper would remark, "You are the smart child to be carrying all that money." One day when I had been to deliver some printing and had stopped to change two shillings, I found when I got home that sixpence was missing. I was terribly upset, and at first would not tell that I had changed the money, but Father knew that the people would not short-change me and questioned me further, and then I admitted that I had gone into McGloyn's to change two shillings. I was sent back there, and sure enough I had left a sixpence on the counter. But even though I brought back the sixpence, Father spanked me, feeling that I needed the lesson not to loiter when on an errand. I remembered it, and for many years would hesitate to change any money.

One would think that with all Father's businesses we should have been well off, but we never were, it was always a struggle to make both ends meet. The only compensation was that others were in the same boat, so there was no striving to keep up with the Joneses. And then Mother had a wonderful nature, she always stressed the fact that the best things in life are comparatively easy to acquire. Father might have done better in the "weekly payment" business, but the idea of taking a shilling a week from poor Irish people who were hardly able to pay it repelled him, and he preferred to try anything else he could to make an honest penny.

With a community as poor as ours, it was only natural that there should have been various societies to help each other; the history of the beginnings of these organizations is full of the milk of human kindness.

The one that I felt was part and parcel of my young years was the Dublin Hebrew Ladies Charitable Society, or the "Ladies Society" as it was called for short. It was founded in 1898 by four charitable women of the community when they heard of a young Jewish woman left in Dublin by her husband while he went on to America. The months passed and the young woman had her baby, and not a word from the husband. There was the regular Board of Guardians, but they did not have any provision for such a case, so the president of the Board talked to his wife, who in turn talked to some of her friends; they found out that for five shillings a week the woman and child could be taken care of, so the five women each contributed a shilling a week from their housekeeping money, until the young husband, having found work in the States, finally sent for his wife and child. In the meantime there was another demand for some extra money—this time it was a young

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mother who had become mentally unbalanced and could not nurse her baby—so the five women continued to donate their shilling a week, the money going to a foster mother who took care of the baby until the mother had recovered. The third demand came when a woman was deserted by her husband; the five donors took care of her and her four children until she found some work. As a result of all these demands, the women finally formed the Society and raised money to keep on hand for emergencies. Mother was the first secretary. I have a very nice tray and teapot, cream pitcher, and sugar basin in Sheffield plate that were given to Mother in 1908 when she resigned as honorary secretary of the Society.

The Society grew, and as the years passed it became a sort of "DAR" for the Irish Jews. The president, once she got into that office, remained there almost for life, and the twenty members of the governing committee were drawn from the most prominent families in the community. When I was a girl, committee meetings were held every month—I know that because the meetings were held in our house. The members of the committee were responsible for collecting subscriptions, and at one time two of the members of the committee would personally call on each member once a month and get the subscription of a shilling, sixpence, or fourpence, according to what amount the woman was able to pay. If by any chance the committee member could not go collecting, she could appoint someone else to do the job, and that was where we younger girls came in handy. As I think back on it, it seems that going collecting for the Ladies Society had much of the excitement for us that work in the Junior League has for girls in this country.

As most of the members of the Society lived in the immediate neighborhood of the South Circular Road, it was a comparatively easy job for the first day, usually a Sunday; the second day was devoted to the town, and then we had to take the streetcar, of course. There was always a competition among the girls to see who could make the biggest collection, so we would call three and four times if we happened not to find someone home. We were usually given a little extra cash by the woman for whom we were collecting so that we could have tea in town at one of the cafés for which Dublin was famous at that time, and no need to say what a thrill that was for us.

I well remember the first time I went collecting. I was fifteen, the youngest to ever get that honor. (Everything happened to me when I was fifteen! I left school, went to work in the printing office, and then I went collecting for the Ladies Society.) It was the first time I had tea in a big café, all on our own with no older person to tell us how to behave. The girl I went with was a year older than I and we were good friends, and both full of fun; really we seemed to do nothing but laugh from the moment we left the house until we returned late that evening. It was very nice to knock at a door, and know the folks upon whom we were calling, and then be called into the parlor and hear, "Oh Jessie, imagine you big enough to go collecting, never realized you were so grown up." Then questions about Mother and the rest of the family, or maybe an offer of some fruit or cake, or if it was tea time a cup of tea, and so we would go, feeling very, very important and grown up. We had plenty to talk about, and the time went very quickly; and then we felt that we were helping in some good work: if we were inclined to forget that part, the blessing we got poured on our heads from the various women we visited served to remind us that we were on a holy mission.

WE HAD some very good friends among the Quakers, one of them an old lady over eighty who remembered when Queen Victoria came to the throne. Lucy Brooks was her name, and she insisted that I call her by her first name. She was very fond of me, and I was permitted once to go on a vacation with her to Wicklow. We stayed there at the home of another Quaker, Louisa Grahame, who was very prominent in the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and had a pet donkey named Jennie. I was twelve at the time of this vacation, and it was the first time I ever went to any other religious service than the Jewish one. I can still see the meeting hall, a very plain room with benches around the wall. As we came in, the various members greeted each other, and I was introduced as Jessie from Dublin; no word about my being Jewish—I guess it did not make much difference to them. When we were all seated, there was a still-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness in the hall, just for a few seconds, and then some woman rose and spoke about some of her personal experiences; I don't remember anything of what she said. After she sat down, someone else rose and spoke some more, and then there was a silence. Next the spirit moved a tall bearded gentleman to sing in a deep bass, and by the time he was through the whole congregation was singing. I sat and listened, and when the singing was over it seemed as if by one accord the congregation rose and left the hall. We gathered in the vestibule for a chat, everyone greeted everyone else, and by the time we were ready to go back to Louisa Grahame's place I felt like one of the crowd.

At lunch one day with Louisa Grahame and Lucy Brooks, as I sat next to the open window of the dining room, I was surprised to feel something brushing my cheek. I looked up startled to find Jennie the donkey nuzzling against me. Louisa was greatly pleased and remarked that I must indeed be a spiritual person for a donkey to make friends with me so easily, and she gave me two lumps of sugar to give to Jennie. In discussing the wonder of Jennie picking on me for her attentions, Louisa said, "Sure she's as clever as a Christian."

Lucy Brooks and I shared a room, and every night as I would get ready to retire, Lucy would remind me to say my prayers. The first night I hurriedly said the "*Shema*" and thought because I said it in Hebrew I was square with the Lord. Lucy, though impressed that I could recite in Hebrew, nevertheless remarked that we should both thank the Lord for our "nice, clean, comfortable bed." So I thanked the Lord for the nice, clean, comfortable bed. Years later that prayer came to mean more to me. At that time, nice, clean, comfortable beds were part and parcel of our daily life, but as I grew older, I realized that this was only a symbol for all the good things of life that one should be grateful for; as Lucy put it at that time, "Jessie, you have been playing, you are tired, and now you can relax in your nice, clean, comfortable bed."

The good things of life are by no means the material things alone, and I have many delightful memories of my growing years that bring me a feeling of gratitude to my Maker: a walk through the Dublin mountains, when a delightful view of sea and woods would suddenly come to my vision, or a long walk in the Phoenix Park and then the opportunity to have a cup of tea at a wayside café, or the chance to listen to a good orchestra playing in one of the famous cafés, or even a run around the block before having to get ready for bed.

One of my closest friends at that time was a Catholic girl named Mollie Murphy; Mollie and I used to meet every Saturday to go for a walk. One Saturday as we were walking home we passed a chapel, and she said she wanted to go in and say a prayer, and would I go in with her. As I had already been into a Quaker meeting house I thought a Catholic chapel would not hurt me, so in I went. I sat on a bench while Mollie went to the altar and lit a candle to St. Anthony and prayed. When we came out of the chapel, Mollie said she hoped St. Anthony would grant her prayer, and added: "Will you pray for me, Jessie, if I tell you what I asked for?" Of course I agreed. And she said, "I prayed that Mother will be sober when I get home."

SATURDAY afternoon was visiting time, and six or seven of us would get together and go calling on some of our friends. People were really very kind to us, and at each house we would be offered refreshment. One Saturday we went to see one of our friends who offered us some chopped liver, a dish we all liked very much; then we left, intending to call on another friend. But when we were about halfway, one of the girls suddenly remembered that Mrs. Zachs always had nice milk buns for us, and we were *fleishig* from the chopped liver—what could we do? It threatened to be an insoluble problem, but at last my older sister offered a formula to extricate us; she lined us up, holding our right hands out and our left hands on our hearts, and made us recite: "One, two, three, God forgive me, I was *fleishig*, and now I'm *milchig*." Thus purified of the taint of meat, we called on Mrs. Zachs, and ate her nice sweet *milchig* buns. But we had no real confidence in my sister's magic chant, for we kept the incident secret.

Getting ready for Succoth was a great event. Each home had its own *succah*, and the children would go collecting chestnuts a few days before the holiday. I remember there were a lot of chestnut trees on a road leading to Dublin mountains, and we would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

organize expeditions to go there and pick up the chestnuts that fell from the trees; or, when necessary, we were not above climbing the trees and shaking down the nuts. These particular chestnuts were not edible, but the boys used to put a hole through them and make a knot on the end of a string, and they would hit the chestnuts against each other; the chestnut that broke the other was called the champion, and as it broke different chestnuts it would add the number of nuts to its title; it was not unusual to find a rather grubby-looking chestnut on the end of string, with the title of "champion of fifty nuts." Well, we would string the nuts and decorate the inside of the succah with them, and of course there were the regulation green branches on the roof. We ate in the succah all the week, and would go visiting each other's *succoth*. The *chazan* had a particularly nice one with a lot of fruit hanging from the roof, and on the last day of the festival he would present the fruit to the boys and girls whom he considered the best behaved.

PREPARATIONS for Passover were started around Purim time, with the koshering of the silver, the soaking of the glasses, etc. As I remember, we used to soak the glasses in a large tub of water and change the water every night for three nights, but some folks I met in after years said that just soaking one night was sufficient. I've been wondering since if perhaps the fact that certain sections had softer water than others might account for the difference in practice. We got all our supplies from England, since the few Jewish grocery stores in Dublin did not carry Passover supplies. Our *matzos* came in large wooden boxes, holding fifty or a hundred pounds, all depending on the size of the order; the matzos were round, and not nearly so palatable as what we get today. The sugar and spices and dried fruits would come in packages with a fancy label, with a lot of Hebrew written on it, to prove that it was *kasher shel Pesach*, "kosher for Passover," and with the picture of a rabbi with a long white beard. Such dried fruits as prunes, raisins, etc., we would purchase in a large grocery store in town, getting the manager to open a fresh box for us; and as there were stores in Dublin that sold nothing but tea, sugar, and coffee, we would purchase our tea and coffee there, the coffee beans being ground in our presence. For milk, we used to accompany our milkman to the fields and stay there as he milked the cows, putting the milk into the large can that we brought. It was a special treat to go for the milk. We never had any butter for Passover, but we did have a lot of cottage cheese, and Mother used to make what we called *gesmerte matzos*, a mixture of cottage cheese and egg, with a little salt and pepper, that was spread on the matzos and baked in the oven. I was not too fond of it, though it did serve to take the dry taste from the "bread of affliction" as we used to call the matzos in those days. We were very sincere in our observance of the holiday, never eating anything away from home during Passover.

The Seder night was always one of great excitement. We always had guests; how we stretched our table I do not know, but our maid, Nannie, was always there to help, and she would take home some "Passover" in the form of half a dozen round matzos. She told me that she used to spread beef dripping on the matzos, and it was a rare treat. The neighboring children also called for their "Passover," as they called the matzos, and the more favored of our friends were regaled with the Passover wine, which was made right in Dublin by a man named Greenberg.

The last day of the holiday was usually one of great excitement. Even the most ardent matzah lover would admit to being anxious for a bit of bread, and the local baker would have nice fresh bread for us as soon as the stars came out.

During the First World War, when the submarines made it impossible to get Passover butter from Denmark, one of the Jewish butter merchants who had connections with an Irish creamery near Cork arranged for Reb Meyer, the rabbi in Cork, to act as *shomer* in the creamery. The agent in Dublin started to write in Hebrew to Reb Meyer, and for a short time the correspondence was carried on in Hebrew between Dublin and Cork, but the letters took an incomprehensibly long time to arrive, until one day both the rabbis received official letters from the censorship office asking them please to write in English, as it was a great deal of trouble to send the letters to London to be translated.

IN ADDITION to the maid, a pretty little woman named Nannie MacCormack

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who stayed with us for twenty-six years (I remember Nannie used to call me "me chicken out of a blue hen"), we had a *"Shabbos goyeh"* named Mrs. McInnary, who would come in at about seven on Saturday morning, start the kitchen fire, and put the kettle on. When the fire was well started, she would run to her next customer about half a block away. She had about six customers in all, and it kept her busy enough running back and forth keeping the fires going and the kettles boiling and the dinners hot; she really earned her threepence a week, but she was always cheery and always singing her songs about the troubles of Ireland: I think her songs gave us a better understanding of the "Trouble" than all our history classes. Later, when gas was brought into the homes, Mrs. McInnary's Saturday tasks became easier.

Incidentally, we never spoke of Mrs. McInnary as the *goyeh*—Mother would not permit us to use the term. Nor would she permit us to speak of the maid as the *shikseh*, though many of our friends used that word. Mother was very fussy about words. Another expression we were forbidden to use was "hip, hip, hurrah," because "hip, hip" was the cry of the persecutors of Jews in the Middle Ages. Whenever the naughty expression came into our reading or recitations, we had to say, "hurrah, hurrah, hurrah."

One incident that Mother used to tell about happened when we first moved to Windsor Terrace and were gradually beginning to be part of the neighborhood. My brother Charlie, who was then three years old, was very fond of salt herring, so Mother one day gave him the tail of the herring to suck on, and he went outdoors to play, still holding on to the tail. After a few minutes there was a loud knocking at the door, and Mother opened the door to find Mrs. Murphy, our next-door neighbor, struggling with Charlie and trying to take the piece of herring from him, he holding on for dear life and screaming, "My mummie gave it to me!" and Mrs. Murphy gesticulating and crying, "Glory be to God, the child is eating raw fish!" Mother could hardly keep from laughing out loud, but she controlled herself, brought Charlie into the house, and thanked Mrs. Murphy for her interest. Only later, as we became better acquainted with the Murphys, did my mother confess that she had given Charlie the herring. Indeed, Mollie Murphy, my friend, actually ate some salt herring at one time, but she never was as fond of it as we were. She boiled the herring, a practice which we, being Litvaks, considered a waste of time and energy.

Our home was at the end of Longwood Avenue, which was a street of fifty homes, twenty-five on each side, one family to each home. The people of Longwood Avenue were minor civil servants, small shopkeepers, and the like, with a few retired older people; the tone of the Avenue was one of middle-class assurance, and the inhabitants constituted as mixed a group in terms of religious affiliations as one could find anywhere in Dublin at that time. We knew them all, and played with the children belonging to the various homes.

In one family the father, who was a Protestant, had married his former housekeeper, a Catholic, and there were four children, brought up as Protestants. On Sunday morning they would all start for church together, and as the Protestant church was first on their way, the father and the four children would go into the church while the mother walked a few blocks farther to the Catholic chapel. We were very friendly with this family, and, perhaps because of the mixed religious background, they seemed very tolerant. The mother was the lost soul in that group, and though she did her best to keep things moving nicely in the home, we found out later that she had many a heartache because she could not join the children in their religious worship.

In another family where the father was a Protestant and the mother a Catholic, the children were brought up as Catholics, except that the father had stipulated that the boys go to the High School, which was Protestant. My brothers also went to that school; my oldest brother, Abram, a brilliant scholar, won scholarships which enabled him to enter Trinity College, Dublin, and from there to graduate with honors in Classics. He was the first of the Lithuanian Jews to go to college, and his success led to many more of the younger members of the community going through Trinity. My younger brother, Charlie, was a good friend of Ned Smith, one of the Catholic boys with a Protestant father whom I've been speaking of. Ned was very

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

friendly with the Jewish boys and played with the Jewish Athletic Club, to which he was of inestimable assistance when it came to carrying the ball and cricket gear when they wanted to play on *Shabbos*. Saturday was the best day to get a place to play on in the Fifteen Acres, in the Phoenix Park, and besides it was easier to get a good club to play against on Saturday: Saturday was Cricket Day during the summer, just as it was Football Day during the winter. The Jewish boys would step out "for a walk," four or five at a time, while Ned went off separately carrying the gear; Ned was leader of the Gentile boys of Jewish persuasion, as one man put it. I remember Ned's scolding my brother Charlie one time during the Nine Days when Charlie wanted to go for a swim at Booterstown, a small village on the bay within walking distance of our place. We were not among the very strict Jews, as strictness goes in Dublin—or, I should say, as strictness went in Dublin at that time—but Ned was friendly with many of the *"shvartz frum"* and could tell us a thing or two about their observances.

The boys had played ball on Saturday for a few seasons and might never have been found out if Mike Noyek, the only son of one of the prominent Jewish families, had not broken his leg one Saturday while playing football. He was brought to a hospital in an ambulance and the leg was set before the boys got up the courage to tell his parents, and then they chose Ned for the task, explaining that "bad news must come through a *goy*." Mike Noyek's leg sounds something like a religious relic these days, but it was a very serious business fifty-odd years ago; the question of whether it was a terrible sin or only a second-rate one to play ball on the Sabbath occupied the minds of the graybeards in *shul* for several weeks. In the end, the incident had some good results, for the more tolerant folks came to see that the games were a healthy outlet for the boys, and they were permitted and even encouraged to play; provided they did not neglect their religious observances for the joy of playing.

Quite a few first-class cricketers and football players developed from that group of *"Shabbos goyim."* I remember that about 1905 the Jewish boys reached the semi-finals in Association Football. There were quite a few "Gentile boys of Jewish persuasion" standing around watching the game, and when they wanted our boys to brace up, they would cry: "Go on the Rabbis! Go on the Rabbis!"—that cry amused me no end, as I still remembered the reaction of the real rabbis to the playing on the Sabbath, or playing on any other day for that matter.

We also had some families living on the Avenue and on the Terrace that were strictly Catholic, and some that were strictly Protestant, and there were three outstanding holidays when feelings ran a temperature for religious and political reasons: St. Patrick's Day, the Twelfth of July, and a Sunday in October when there would be a parade in honor of Parnell. On St. Patrick's day many of the Protestants made it a point of honor to wear nothing green, while the Catholics wore the regulation sprig of shamrock—and often many Jews, too, wore the shamrock, depending on which particular Gentile was the big friend at the time. On the Twelfth of July, all the good Orangemen went on excursions to Belfast, to go and hand it to King James once again. Parnell's day usually brought us guests from Cork, the Dempseys, old friends who were strong Parnellites and would take advantage of the reduced railroad fares to come to Dublin, walk in the parade, and visit with us. The parade would take in the cemetery where Parnell was buried, and we children used to talk of "Parnell's funeral," so for many years I was under the impression that he rose from the dead and was buried anew every year. The visits of the Dempseys from Cork on Parnell's day gave us great prestige with some of the factions on the Avenue, whereas with others we had a hard time explaining ourselves. Parnell's day was in any case a day for squabbling. The more intolerant would call us names, and of course the anti-Parnellites made nasty references to Kitty O'Shea. But it did not last long; usually on the next day we were all friends again and ganging up on the Bridge kids, as we called the gang that lived around Harold's Cross Bridge. For some reason, we and our cousins were the only Windsor Terrace children who played with the Avenue gang; the other children belonging to Windsor Terrace were in the Bridge gang.

Auntie Jackson lived at the corner of the Avenue, and we lived next door. Shortly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

after we moved in, my brother and the Jackson boys broke the stone wall between the two back gardens, and so we could go from one house to the other without having to go outside. This was very useful when we got into a fight that was too much for us: we could run into Auntie's door, through the back yard and our house, and on up the Bridge while the enemy waited for us to emerge.

There was a Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews—the "Jews' Society," as they usually called it. How faithfully they worked to convert us, and how we mocked at them! One day a young converted Jew working for the society knocked at Auntie's door when my brother Charlie happened to be there, and he politely told Charlie that he had come to save him. Charlie was just Bar Mitzvah at the time, and in a mood to show off his skill in argument and his knowledge of Hebrew, a language that the poor *meshumed*, the convert, did not know. Charlie proved a difficult customer and in the end the man gave up, but before leaving he asked if there were any other Jews on the Terrace. Charlie directed him to the house next door and then ran through the back yard just in time to open our door as the missionary knocked. "I believe we have met before," said Charlie in stately tones, and the poor missionary went off again on his unrewarding rounds.

The "Jews' Society" held out all kinds of bait to get us to come to their meetings: they offered to teach English to the older members of the community who had recently arrived from Russia, and they would teach us children to sew, and paint, and even hold picnics for us—if only we would come. But we were never really tempted. They held meetings on the street near our home every Sunday. One of the men who conducted the meetings was a converted Jew who would hold forth in Yiddish on the joys of believing in the Messiah. We used to hang around to heckle, until some of our parents got hold of a report of the society that mentioned the success of the meetings at the corner of Martin Street, where the young Jewish children were "eager to learn the truth." After that we were ordered to boycott the meetings, and then it was not unusual to see a group of Jewish boys playing marbles quite close to the prayer meeting without paying it the slightest attention—without even singing the lewd words we had for some of the more popular hymn tunes.

However, a real scandal broke loose around the South Circular Road when three of the girls came home one day singing "Onward Christian Soldiers" with all the gusto of converts. Inquiries revealed that they had learned the hymn at an afternoon class held by the "Jews' Society" for girls about eight to twelve. The teachers were very kind to the Jewish children, and taught them to sing, recite, play games in unison, and do Irish crochet work, and often gave them sweets. The children had simply told their mothers that they were in a club, and no one had thought to inquire further, assuming probably that it was a sort of neighborhood gathering. The parents were greatly angered at this attempt to lure their children into Christianity, and the uproar led to the organization of a girls' club of our own.

THE club was called the Adelaide Girls Club and met in the schoolrooms of the Adelaide Road *shul*. The president was Mrs. Solomons, who belonged to the "English Jews," as we called those who had been settled in Ireland before the Litvak invasion. She was a very fine lady, and very kind to the girls. We met twice weekly, Sunday and Wednesday, and we had the usual classes and activities: sewing, singing, marching, painting, and, at one time, cooking lessons and Hebrew lessons; it was like the Jewish centers as we know them in the United States. There was a social evening once a month, and often we would invite outsiders to give us talks on any subjects they were interested in; I recollect hearing a talk on Disraeli and one on the Indian Mutiny, the latter by some friend of Mrs. Solomons who had personal contacts with people who had fought in the Mutiny.

There was a lot of talent among the girls, and we had public concerts at which the girls contributed their full share to the entertainment. We had a good library, and we used to have discussion groups where we freely aired our opinions on the questions of the hour. We generally closed the meetings by singing from Ruth, "Entreat me not to leave thee." Mrs. Solomons would accompany the singing on the piano, which we had purchased with money made from some of our

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concerts. We had no uniforms, and no badges, and though we did have a few competitions in sewing, the competitive spirit was not very strong. We seemed to be more intent on doing things together, and each meeting was really a session of finding out about each other.

The club continued for many years, but with the organizing of a Dramatic Club, and a Girl Guide Troop, and the Athletic Club with a section for the girls who wanted to play tennis, the old Girls Club disbanded. But many of the friendships I formed in the club have continued through the years; I still correspond with a friend in Dublin, and one in Bulawayo, Rhodesia, and one in Dallas, Texas.

These friends belonged to a little subgroup of five of us within the Girls Club that we called the Outing Club. We used to contribute threepence a week from our pocket money, as we were all employed at that time, and though we gave most of our wages to our parents, we kept a little for ourselves. In those days, you could get a good seat in the gallery of the theater for sixpence, so during the season we would manage to go twice a month. I remember seeing *Peter Pan* when it was first produced—and how we clapped for Tinker Bell! We argued on the way home about whether our clapping could actually have helped keep Tinker Bell still in circulation, and one of the girls ventured the opinion that the "little people" were just a product of the imagination of the *goyim* and not at all in keeping with Litvak practicality. Well, Litvak practicality or not, it was nicer to believe in "little people." Fate was kind to the five of us—we all married well, and the four who are still living are quite comfortably circumstanced.

There was a Boys' Brigade, a sort of Boy Scout movement of those days, and the company attached to St. Peter's School, which most of the Jewish boys attended, was Company 3. One of the Jewish boys was invited to join the Brigade, and he very proudly came home with his cap and the badge with "3" on it. His father almost hit the ceiling; he said it was an organization made up to convert the boys, and the "3" was obviously for the Holy Trinity. After a lot of argument and explanation, however, the boy was permitted to remain in Company 3.

We had such a lot of prejudices about crosses and any symbol of Christianity that I wonder we ever got over them. The sidewalks were all of concrete blocks, and we would walk home very carefully, because if we walked on the line it would make a cross, which of course was taboo. We also seemed to have great faith in the power of the *mezuzah*. I remember listening to some of the Gentile girls telling ghost stories, and one of my Jewish friends whispered to me in explanation of all the dreadful incidents that seemed to happen to the *goyim* in these stories: "It's because they have no *mezuzah* on their doors."

THERE is one story that Mother told me that I think might be of some interest historically. This happened in Cork in the early 1880's. The congregation was composed of newly arrived emigrants from Lithuania, many of them from a town called Akimayan (spelling my own). They were all in the weekly payment business, and Monday was the day on which they customarily called on their customers for their weekly payments of one shilling. Well, that year the first day of Rosh Hashanah happened to fall on a Monday, and the men were afraid that if they did not go collecting, their customers would spend their shillings and they would never get caught up.

Reb Meyer, Cork's defender of Orthodoxy —rabbi, *shochet, chazan, mohel,* and Hebrew teacher—was a tall and stately man, a little bit of a mystic and a big bit of a fraud. After the Sunday evening services ushering in the holiday, Reb Meyer rose to make a special announcement: "Tomorrow is Monday, and the first day of *yomtov*. If any of you go collecting, I warn you that a curse will fall on you, and you will die."

Most of the congregation found this threat rather amusing, but one young man who did go out collecting fell ill on Monday evening. The doctor could find nothing wrong with him, but the patient kept talking of "Reb Meyer's curse." Father went to visit him and tried to reason with him, and even asked that if there be a curse, it fall on him, and leave the sick man free. But no, the man kept insisting that as he had gone collecting on *yomtov* he would have to pay with his life, and in a few days he died. Reb Meyer tried to make capital out of it and keep the congregation in constant fear of his curses,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Mother, feeling that matters had gone too far, wrote to the editor of the Yiddish paper in Vilna, or Kovno, I'm not sure which, telling the whole story. The editor happened to have known Reb Meyer's father, and he wrote an editorial reprimanding Reb Meyer very strongly and saying that the son of such a fine father ought not to besmirch his father's name with such cheap chicanery. When the paper arrived in Cork, Reb Meyer was so furious that he rose in *shul* on the Sabbath and placed a curse on Mother, wishing that she never have any more children. Mother remained unimpressed, and I was one of the three children born after the curse in defiance of Reb Meyer.

SATURDAY afternoon was a gala time, when we would walk to St. Stephen's Green to listen to the band, usually the band of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. Mother would go with us then, and the whole place seemed like fairyland, with the beautiful flowers, and the broad lawn on which we could sit and listen to the band, or, better still, play tag in and out of the crowd. Everyone was dressed in his best, and the laughter and light talk surrounded us like a wave of good will.

Our home being on the canal, we would see the Jewish folk passing there during the High Holidays when it was customary to say the prayer alongside a running stream. Everyone in the community was Orthodox, and everyone kept a kosher house, and some of the girls I played with were extreme enough to tie their handkerchiefs on their wrists, since one could not carry anything on the Sabbath. I remember Aunt coming to see us and carrying an umbrella on a Saturday because it was raining, and some of my Jewish friends would not speak to me because my aunt had broken the Sabbath. I told Mother about it, and Mother told me to tell the girls that an umbrella was considered part of one's clothing. After I told the girls that, they were willing to speak to me again; I guess they knew about as much about the fine points of Sabbath observances as I did.

Queen Victoria's visit to Dublin at the turn of the century is one of the highlights in my memory. The anti-British led by Maud Gonne McBride were very vociferous, and when the group favoring the Queen put on a big picnic for the children attending the National Schools, the other side also arranged a picnic for the Catholic children, or I should say the more extreme nationalistic children. The children attending the Jewish School went to the excursion arranged by the Loyalists. Since my sisters and I went to the Central Model School, a sort of semi-private school, we were not asked to any of the excursions, but our parents took us on a visit to the Zoo, with an opportunity to watch the parade as the Queen entered the city.

The Ulster King-at-Arms, in full regalia, rode ahead of the Queen to the gates of the city—not the real gates, which had long been taken down, but false gates erected for the occasion—and asked permission of the Mayor for the Queen to enter. The Mayor gave her permission, and she entered. The whole ceremony made such an impression on us that for months afterward we played a game called the entrance of the Queen, in which we would solemnly knock at the gate and go through all the antics of getting permission for "Her Gracious Majesty to enter."

We saw the Queen many times during her visit, since she stayed at the Viceregal Lodge in the Phoenix Park, and she had to pass frequently on the South Circular Road. There would not even be many folks to watch. On one occasion I happened to see her coming when I had a small bunch of violets in my hand, and I threw it into the carriage, getting a special smile which delighted me immensely until I overheard a woman standing nearby say, "The poor child, she is too dull of apprehension to get the meaning of it all." So I was too dull of apprehension!

THE death of the Queen came a few years after her visit to Dublin. At school on the day the news came through, the principal announced: "We are gathered here this morning, to make a formal statement that the Queen is dead, and as is customary in this school, you will all rise now and sing 'God Save the King.'"

Well, what shall I tell you? as they say in Yiddish. You could hear a pin drop. Of the five hundred girls assembled, about two hundred stood up and sang. The others remained sitting and scowling. After the singing, the principal announced that school would be closed for the rest of the week, and we marched out. When we got outdoors the fun began.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why did you stand? You know she was a ———!"

"Oh, you know she wasn't to blame for the troubles in Ireland so far off."

And back and forth went the arguments of the two factions, according to the way they had heard the subject discussed in their homes.

Mollie, my closest friend, was among those who remained sitting, and she was disappointed in me and told me so. But I came pretty well fortified with arguments, for we had discussed the question at home, and Mother had explained to me that since we had found sanctuary under good Queen Victoria, we owed her our loyalty. I told that to Mollie, who finally agreed that we might perhaps owe some allegiance to her, but then she turned at once to another girl: "You, Lizzie, you're Irish, and your folks are Irish as far back as Adam's time, and for you to forget what the old ——— did to Ireland, and to get up and do her honor!" But Lizzie also was fortified with an argument, and she told Mollie and the others that if we were ever to get anywhere we would have to forget old grievances and accept the change in the world. We were all fairly good friends again before we had gone very far on our way home, all agreeing that whatever the Queen's character four days holiday was something to be grateful for. (Incidentally, some of those girls who remained sitting while we sang "God Save the King" were among the leaders in the 1916 Rebellion.)

Generally speaking, we Jewish children had shifting allegiances—one week with the Catholics and one week with the Protestants. When we were on the Catholic side, we would taunt the Protestant girls with a chant that went like this:

Swaddler, Swaddler on the wall,
A half a loaf will do you all,
A farthing candle will show you light
To read your Bible on Friday night.

(It is hard to see now what was supposed to be so insulting about this.)

In our Protestant phases, we taunted the Catholic girls with:

Holy Father, I've come to confess.
Well, my child, go on with the rest.
Holy Father, I killed a cat.
Oh my child, you should not do that.
Holy father, it was a Protestant cat.
Oh my child, God bless you for that.

But after all the singing and taunting, we would finally begin to play all together, and generally we left for home all the best of friends.

As I think back and try to see what were the special characteristics that colored the life of those days, it seems to me that one important fact was that there were no telephones. That made running errands a necessity, and that is why, for instance, I felt so closely involved in the development of the Ladies Society, and with my father's various businesses, and with the whole excitement of the Dublin streets at all hours of the day.

Walking was an essential part of my life. Our school was two miles from home, on the other side of the city. The carfare was a penny, and the arrangement that Mother made with us was to give us sixpence a week, and we could go one way—it would be the ride into school, to prevent our being late—and that would take care of fivepence, so we would have a penny a week to spend: not a large sum. On the other hand, if we arose early enough to walk to school we were permitted to keep the carfare, and when the weather was at all favorable I often had my full sixpence at the end of the week. We rarely took the car home from school. There were so many fascinating parts of the city to pass through on our way home from school, and there were about sixty different ways we could go from Marlborough Street to Windsor Terrace; we would have considered it a waste of good time to sit in a streetcar, which always went the one way. I remember especially the Wednesday afternoons when we would meet the herds of cattle being driven to the market near the Phoenix Park; in my childhood one didn't have to live in the country to be familiar with animals—the cattle and the horses were part of the life and smell of the city.

I suppose, really, it is impossible for me to get down on paper the Dublin of those days, with all its colorful sights and the people of its streets. And especially so many of the Jews who were friends of ours; all in all, I remember them as good friends and good human beings, strong and industrious and anxious to carve out a life for themselves and their children.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OUR FREEDOM—AND THE RIGHTS OF COMMUNISTS

A Reply to Irving Kristol

ALAN F. WESTIN

ONCE, so a Spanish legend tells us, there grew in the forest a vine so strong that no animal could break it. Contests were held among the beasts, at which a piece of the vine would be cut and tied to a massive boulder so that champions from far and wide could pit their strength against it. Time after time the cords remained unbroken. One day, after the elephant had tugged in vain and the animals stood marveling at the vine's strength, a fox slipped over to it and, unnoticed, gnawed away at the strands. Ignoring the jeers of the spectators, he then walked over to the end of the rope, gave one firm pull, and the vine broke at the gnawed section. Thus, we are told, a fox succeeded where the mammoth beasts of the forest had failed.

In recent months, the problem of redefining our constitutional freedoms in a cold-war setting has received public attention, much of it stimulated by an article by Irving Kristol in the March issue of COMMENTARY. So brilliantly does this article read that it has won acclaim from John Haynes Holmes, Ernest Angell, Norman Thomas, Ludwig Lewisohn, Paul Hays, and many other diverse liberals, while labor unions, private organizations, and the Mutual Security Agency have reprinted its contents. Yet, as one rereads it, there emerges a feeling of having witnessed a dangerous gnawing away of strands, in the form of exceptions, from the vine of civil freedoms, a process which —without the elephantine strainings of McCarthyism—may still jeopardize the rope itself.

The central question of Mr. Kristol's article is posed by its subtitle, "Do We Defend Our Rights by Protecting Communists?" and the answer given is a resounding "No!"—expanded to include fellow-travelers as well. Stripped to essentials, the argument is as follows: The situation regarding civil liberties is confused today because certain duped liberals are defending Communists and Communist fellow-travelers when the issues at stake are not civil liberties at all but simply questions of "Communism." Such behavior brands liberals as pro-Communist before the American people and accounts for Senator McCarthy's victories over liberals in the battle for civil liberties. The solution to this confusion, it is argued, is to redefine the battle lines. The liberal must establish his anti-Communism in a particular way outlined by Mr. Kristol. Then, *if* he should desire to do so, the liberal can employ a "sober" approach and defend the civil rights of Communists and fellow-travelers as a tactic of "expediency in particular circumstances."

Now, I would agree wholeheartedly with Mr. Kristol that Communists pose a problem for American society, that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the Communist

---

IRVING KRISTOL's article in the March issue of COMMENTARY, "'Civil Liberties,' 1952—A Study in Confusion," examining critically the arguments of many sincere civil libertarians who assert that an "extreme" anti-Communism is endangering our freedoms, aroused national discussion. A ten-page selection of diverse opinions appeared in our "Letters from Readers" department in the May number. We offer here a fuller treatment of the issues raised by Mr. Kristol, and while it is of course the private expression of Mr. Westin, it may be said in general to represent also the views of many others who felt that Mr. Kristol's treatment of the subject showed insufficient concern for the preservation of civil liberties. ALAN F. WESTIN, a Teaching Fellow in Government at Harvard University, a member of the District of Columbia bar, and a member of the lawyers' panel of the Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, has published articles in the *Nation* and in the Columbia and Yale law reviews. A rejoinder by Mr. Kristol to Mr. Westin's article, and to a letter by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. also taking issue with his position, will be found in our "Letters from Readers" section this month (beginning on page 83).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the liberal, and that not every time the activities of Communists are restricted is an issue of civil liberties raised. I would further agree that in the past there have been "defenses" of civil liberties that were, in reality, propaganda operations by persons who do not believe in our concepts of civil liberties, and that in such campaigns the liberal must take no part. Lastly, I would agree that the liberal must defend civil liberties as a liberal, or as Mr. Kristol puts it, "as one of *us*, defending *their* liberties."

But although these important observations are found in Mr. Kristol's article, they are the shrubbery and not the real roots of his argument. These roots are to be found in four important premises on which he rests his case.

FIRST, Mr. Kristol establishes strikingly narrow standards of anti-Communism, yet postulates these particular standards as absolute essentials for the liberal who would defend civil liberties. We are told that the American people "know" that Senator McCarthy is, "like them, unequivocally anti-Communist," and repeatedly throughout the article Senator McCarthy's peculiar brand of anti-Communism is equated with the national will. But even recognizing the Senator's appeal to large segments of the population, such a unitary concept of anti-Communism is as dubious factually as it is a dangerous perspective for examining civil liberties. There is, after all, a vital difference between the political opportunism and special pleading of Senator McCarthy and the anti-Communism of social democracy, which adds to the exposure of Stalinists the necessity for support of economic and military aid bills to halt Communism abroad, and a loyalty to constitutional freedoms at home. To accept the McCarthy index on behalf of the nation concedes without justification one flank of the civil liberties battle line.

Again, in his standards of anti-Communism, Mr. Kristol transforms personal conceptions of history into categorical imperatives for every liberal who would defend civil liberties. Thus we are told that the liberal can establish his anti-Communism only by confessing the liberal "sins," chiefly that the New Deal "lent aid and comfort to Stalinist tyranny." With a remarkable "facility for nose-counting," as Joseph Rauh termed it, Mr. Kristol explains that the "major segment of American liberalism" during the New Deal were simply parrots of the Communist line who denied the existence of Soviet concentration camps, "approved" the purge trials, "applauded" the massacre of the non-Communists in Spain by the GPU during the Civil War, and gave "its blessing" to the liquidation of millions of Soviet kulaks. Because of this past, only a public breast-beating for these errors will prove the liberal an anti-Communist today.

Mr. Kristol has, of course, every right to his own reading of American liberalism during the period of the New Deal. But to say that agreement with this controversial and monolithic portrait of New Deal liberals is the requirement for one's public acceptance as an anti-Communist, is simply an attempt to impose a partisan perspective under the guise of helping the campaign for civil liberties. Just as liberals do not accept Senator McCarthy as the index of anti-Communism, neither will they accept Mr. Kristol's stained canvas of New Deal liberalism as the *sine qua non* for an "unconfused" civil liberties struggle.

THE second premise of Mr. Kristol's analysis is his repudiation of the distinction between legitimate civil freedoms of Communists and the commission by them of conspiratorial or criminal acts that threaten our free institutions. The danger to American society from a Communist's being treated with procedural fairness before the McCarran Committee is blended with the danger caused by Communists working at the top level of the Atomic Energy Commission. Both sets of activity are placed beyond the pale of civil freedoms.

This merging of civil liberties situations into simple matters of Communism assumes bizarre proportions when applied factually. The Hollywood Ten hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities involved for Mr. Kristol solely the right of Communists and fellow-travelers to make movies at plush salaries. There were no issues here of the right to counsel; to be confronted by, reply to, and cross-examine your accusers; to exercise the Fifth Amendment's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guarantee against compulsory self-incrimination or to delimit the scope of questioning into a person's social and political affiliation by a committee of Congress. The University of California faculty oath, in Mr. Kristol's eyes, was merely a case of a university establishing a justified policy of not hiring Communists and fellow-travelers. Only through "undue hysteria" could one find a duty to speak up against the imposition of a test oath in violation of the California constitution (as the California court itself declared), or against the implications of such administrative procedures applied to university life in a free society. In similar fashion, Mr. Kristol excludes from the range of civil liberties the Congressional examination of Owen Lattimore, since this was merely exposing an enormously effective Communist-liner who shaped our China policy. To view this as a matter of protecting "dissent" or "nonconformity" is labeled ridiculous.

From these illustrations, it becomes clear that Mr. Kristol, despite two hurried genuflections to "free speech" and "equal rights," possesses a remarkably dehydrated conception of a civil liberties issue. That he invokes the errors and dangers of Communism to justify this, shows how far his position is removed from the essence of constitutional guarantees. These have always rested on the notion that exceptions are permitted only when absolutely necessary for the preservation of our basic values. A sense of proportion must attend the recognition of dangers to our society from native Communism. To suggest that procedural fairness and the rights established by the First Amendment imperil our liberty bears an unfortunate resemblance to the philosophy of Military Judge Effingham Swan in Sinclair Lewis's novel *It Can't Happen Here*, who began a "hearing" on subversive activities with the statement: "*Habeas corpus*—due processes of law—too, too bad!—All those ancient sanctities, dating, no doubt, from Magna Carta—been suspended—oh, just temporarily, y'know—state of crisis—unfortunate necessity. . . ."

The third basis for Mr. Kristol's analysis is his portrait of the men who today defend the civil liberties of Communists and fellow-travelers: ". . . the Alan Barths, the Henry Steele Commagers, the Zechariah Chafees, the Howard Mumford Joneses, the Ralph Barton Perrys, the William O. Douglases." These men, and civil libertarians in general, are pictured as believing: (a) that Communists are merely a more radical or fanatic brand of liberal; (b) that Communists are "on our side" in the battle for civil liberties; and (c) that the fate of Communist *ideas* involves the fate of liberalism in America. This is a very handy whipping boy to bang around for nine double-column pages but it is representative of organized liberalism only in Mr. Kristol's imagination. True, there are many such persons as Mr. Kristol describes. But only by sidestepping the essential and dominant position of the quoted writers, and by totally ignoring the active anti-Communism of such liberal organizations as the Americans for Democratic Action and the American Civil Liberties Union can Mr. Kristol's villain be equated with the liberals who today defend the civil liberties of Communists.

In judging the accuracy of this picture, one should also observe that not only the intellectual conclusions of these men are challenged but that their very honesty is cleverly put into issue. Professor Commager, we are told, deludes us with "sleight of hand"; Alan Barth employs a "liberal rhetoric of insinuation"; and Francis Biddle composed his book *The Fear of Freedom* out of a "sense of shame and a cowardliness to confess that shame." This whole school of liberals is then adroitly stripped of their anti-Communist beliefs, for Mr. Kristol declares that they are men who view Communism "out of the left corner of the eye," and that their rejection of Communism is only a "repudiation aiming to linger in the memory as a floating credential."

This is fine phrase-making, but it is at the same time literary tar-and-feathering, ruthless and unjustified. A smear is still a smear, even when done in onomatopoeia. One questions seriously whether such an approach helps end "confusion" or provides a guide to action for persons genuinely concerned with civil freedoms.

Fourth, there is a constant note running through Mr. Kristol's article which suggests that maybe liberals need not protect the principles of civil liberties at all when

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Communists or fellow-travelers are involved, even after the "confusion" has been cleared away. For Mr. Kristol keynotes his argument by stating: "*If* a liberal wishes to defend the civil liberties of Communists and Communist fellow-travelers. . . ." and "*If* he so desires [the liberal can] defend the expediency in particular circumstances of allowing them the right to be what they are." Here, the preservation of civil freedoms receives the emotional importance of choosing between a blue or a green toothbrush. The liberal himself seems to have no stake in it; American society seems to be without concern in the outcome. After the violence of Mr. Kristol's attack on the "confusion" of civil liberties today, we should mark well the serenity he attains once a cataloguing of sins, omissions, and deceptions has been completed.

Having identified the four pillars on which this article rests, we can recognize the structure for what it really is. Mr. Kristol has not selected among alternative courses of action in the struggle to preserve civil liberties. He has not resolved "confusion." He has not created a new, more honest, more realistic method for engaging in civil liberties campaigns. He has simply redefined the term "civil liberties" to remove the necessity of having to participate in the actual, important cases of civil liberties that are current today. He would remain uncommitted until there is a really clear case of procedural unfairness, not this shilly-shally over Owen Lattimore, the Hollywood Ten, and the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. He would remain inactive until there is a real purge of a university, not this halfway business out at the University of California. He requires impeccable, unblemished victims of McCarthyism, not these ambiguous characters like Oliver Edmund Clubb, John Stewart Service, and Philip Jessup. Mr. Kristol has, in brief, so effectively sidestepped the problem of civil liberties that he is standing forty yards to the rear, throwing rocks at the foibles of the participants.

The most effective way to demonstrate the inadequacy of this gloss on civil liberties is to restate the bedrock principles upon which our constitutional freedoms rest. Louis Waldman has done this eloquently in a speech presenting the New York State Bar Association's proposed code of procedure for Congressional hearings: "There are not two Bills of Rights, one for sinners and a different one for saints. From the standpoint of civil rights there are no such people as racketeers and non-racketeers, Communists and anti-Communists. There are only human beings with rights, privileges, and immunities guaranteed to them by the Constitution."

If this egalitarian rationale were the *only* reason for civil liberties, few persons would be fighting for their retention today, and it would be next to impossible to protect the civil rights of any noncomformists, let alone those of the Communist. In fact, however, there are at least three further, "*selfish*" concepts behind civil liberties, concepts that were recognized by the Minute Men and yet are still grade-A merchandise for the atomic age. It is these which provide the mass appeal for the civil libertarian, and, in the long sweep of American history, have triumphed over the McCarthys of each era.

First, one defends the civil liberties of Communists because under our system of constitutional precedents a loss of liberty by one defendant is a loss to each citizen who may attempt to claim the same right at a future date. The whole tapestry of our most precious civil freedoms is recorded in cases involving—not immaculates—but thieves, smugglers, murderers, religious fanatics, subversives, espionage agents, and sundry unsavory criminals. The right to criticize or defend civil liberty itself can be said to rest on the fact that an anti-Semitic publisher who printed a mess of filth denouncing Jewish "gangsters" was protected in the courts by our guarantee of a free press. When the Supreme Court first considered the question of government wire-tapping in 1928, the defendant was a smuggler who shipped two million dollars' worth of whiskey into the United States each year from Canada. The rights of free speech were reaffirmed in a case involving Father Terminiello, a leader of the racist Union of Christian Crusaders, who delivered an inflammatory speech in Chicago denouncing Jews and Negroes. Our security from unreasonable searches and seizures was recently put at stake when a grubby counterfeiter of ration coupons had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his office raided by the police without a warrant.

Thus, the rights of John Howard Lawson, Harold Christoffel, Frederick Vanderbilt Field, and the Joint Anti-Fascists cannot be brushed aside as "underground conspiracy" and unrelated to "dissent" or "free thought." The consideration by the courts of federal loyalty programs, of guilt by association, of Feinberg Laws and McCarran Acts and Smith Acts, does not involve merely the interests of Communists and fellow-travelers. It intimately affects the interests of all persons who could be reached by such legislative and administrative measures, and in this day of tension the potential bite of these weapons is deep and wide.

True, as Mr. Kristol points out, this is a grueling job. True, the men of good will often wind up with their protests in the anthologies while the restrictions go merrily on. But the struggle to convince the masses of the American people to safeguard civil liberties has always been a minority battle. Professor Commager reminds us that "each generation has to vindicate these freedoms anew, and for itself." It may be difficult, in this era of Koreas, to reaffirm that the civil liberties of anti-Communists are bound up in the manner with which we deal with William Z. Foster, Gus Hall, Harry Bridges, and Edith Blau, but this is the cold fact.

Thus, the first reason why we defend the civil liberties of Communists is to protect ourselves—a homespun and uncomplicated reason that is as valid today as in 1735 when crusty old Andrew Hamilton traveled from Philadelphia to defend a New York printer of dubious taste named Peter Zenger accused of libeling the Royal Governor. Requiring one citizen to worry about restraints on government when the other fellow is in the jailhouse may be asking a good deal from our citizenry, but this is the basic assumption of our constitutional framework, and it has served us well for one hundred and sixty-three years.

THE second reason why we defend the civil liberties of Communists is because of the concrete and harmful effects upon our society of failing to do so. This "pragmatic necessity for freedom" has been capsuled by Professor Commager as follows: "It is, you see, with the practical consequences to our society of the limitations on freedom that we are concerned. We do not protect freedom in order to indulge error. We protect freedom in order to discover truth. We do not maintain freedom in order to permit eccentricity to flourish; we maintain freedom in order that society may benefit from criticism, even eccentric criticism. We do not encourage dissent for sentimental reasons; we encourage dissent because we cannot live without it."

With Professor Commager this is expressed in ringing prose. The subway rider echoes it when he nods securely to his neighbor, "Aw, let those birds talk, it's a free country, ain't it?" In both cases, this is the most hard-headed, dollars-and-cents reason for protecting complete civil liberties. The highly necessary loyalty program for scientists, designed to keep Communists out of atomic projects, may be so broadly framed and unwisely administered that we will lose the services of loyal scientists, jeopardize our atomic superiority, and harm the defense potential of the nation. Professor Walter Gellhorn of the Columbia Law School devotes his book *Security, Loyalty and Science* to establishing that this is taking place today, and urging that we drastically revise our federal loyalty program. Is it pro-Communist, soft, or looking out of the left corner of the eye to concern ourselves with the effect on our atomic program of loyalty procedures designed to deal with Communists?

Again, take the crisis in the foreign service caused by attacks upon Communists in the State Department and upon policy advisors such as Professor Lattimore. The Department cannot now obtain enough college graduates of top caliber to fill its needs, as Secretary of State Acheson explained, because of "the unwillingness of young men and women to subject themselves to that sort of attack." At the same time, experts of unimpeachable loyalty have declined to give advice to the State Department—when the Department plucks up courage enough to ask for it—even though these men are often the best informed in their field and their assistance vital for the formulation of an intelligent policy. Moreover, the *Foreign Service Journal* has reported a tendency by overseas personnel to hew to the official "line" in trans-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mitting their reports, even though this "line" might contradict their on-the-spot judgment. The lessons of John Carter Vincent, Oliver Edmund Clubb, and John Stewart Service have done their work.

In this illustration of the effects of curtailing freedom—directed against Communists, of course—we see a threat to our foreign service. The fact that the goal involved was the important and necessary one of ridding our State Department of security risks is no solace for the atmosphere of fear which has developed. The end does not justify the means here any more than it did in the Soviet Union during the 1920's and 1930's, even though the Kristol school does not seem to recognize the parallel.

One more example of effects should be noted. Mr. Kristol states that it is absurd to view the University of California faculty oath controversy as a "purge." Only a few dozen out of over a thousand refused to sign, and after all, "one swallow does not make a spring, nor one injustice an apocalypse." Contrast this characterization with the *results* at California.

At the outset of the oath controversy, over three hundred faculty members met to declare their refusal to sign the oath. As pressures mounted and men were forced to choose between their principles and their livelihood, the number dropped. At the first sweep twenty-six "non-signers" were ejected for their refusal and thirty-seven others resigned from the university in explicit protest against the oath.

But the damage here cannot be measured numerically in faculty dismissals and resignations. What happened to the University of California as an institution when this cleansing of Communists took place? Fifty-five courses had to be dropped from the curriculum. The department of theoretical physics fell overnight from the best in the nation to a ghost unit—three-fourths of its internationally renowned scientists having left in protest. An institute under the department of psychology lost a contract with the Office of Naval Research because it no longer had sufficient personnel to meet navy standards. In the department of psychology itself, one thousand inquiries concerning graduate curriculum were received in the year before the oath controversy; only three hundred arrived the year following it. In less than a twelve-month period, more than forty-seven of the world's most distinguished scholars refused offers of appointment to the University of California. Students interviewed by the press replied that the whole year was a nightmare of suspicions, recriminations, and disrupted studies. The caucus replaced the seminar; the mass meeting dubbed for lectures. A great university, respected throughout the nation and the world for its faculty, its research projects, and its student life, was and is still disrupted ominously by a "justified" policy of the regents in removing "Communists and fellow-travelers" from their institution.

Thus, the second reason why we protect the civil liberties of Communists is because we want to keep our science developing at maximum efficiency, our foreign service ably staffed and advised, and our universities free of the tensions of an oath campaign. We defend the rights of Communists since, as the New York *Times* editorialized: "If, in the process of arming ourselves against Stalinist infiltration, we so modify our society that the same barriers to free thought or speech exist here as in the Soviet Union, then victory will be futile indeed."

The third basis for the civil libertarian's position is the need to preserve our moral leadership in the world as the arsenal of freedom. We are now a feared Goliath in a bipolar world, attempting to win as necessary allies the uncomfortable and distrustful nations of the Middle East, Asia, and Western Europe. So far, we have managed a successful policy of exports: guns, goods, and free institutions. But if we make unrequired exceptions here in the United States in the name of curbing Communism, our export of free institutions becomes that much cheaper, and Communist salesmanship about our capitalist police-state that much more alluring. Secretary of State Dean Acheson has warned, "Today we all represent the United States. . . . If there are acts or words of violence, discrimination, and irresponsibility, the world sees and hears them . . . for nations are continually watching."

The present situation with passports is a prime example. As signatory to the UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

United States pledged as "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations" that "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country" (Article 13, Paragraph 2). Citing this provision, we have repeatedly leveled official attacks at the refusal of totalitarian nations to permit their nationals to travel freely. Our protests have helped to demonstrate the nature of totalitarianism to our allies. Yet, in recent years, the Passport Division of the State Department has steadily increased its restrictions on the right of American citizens to travel abroad. Leo Isacson was denied a passport to attend an international conference in Paris in 1948 since it favored the Greek guerrilla cause. Paul Robeson was refused permission to travel abroad to give concerts and make speeches. Dr. J. Henry Carpenter of the Protestant Council of New York was barred from visiting Japan for meetings with Japanese church leaders. Rockwell Kent, Dr. Edward Corson, Albert Kahn, Dr. Ralph Spitzer, Howard Fast, and Corliss Lamont have met similar refusals. United States immigration authorities prevented Vincent Hallinan, presidential candidate of the Progressive party, from crossing the Canadian border to deliver a speech to a Vancouver labor union. There have been no hearings. There are no standards set for these refusals. In the few cases where the Passport Division has given an explanation, the sole ground asserted is that the trip would not be "in the best interests of the United States."

As could be expected, our departure from an observance of the right to free travel has already produced its effects abroad. State Department observers have reported a loss of American prestige in the capitals of Western Europe. The New York *Times* noted that "influential circles abroad . . . have begun to react cynically to United States pronouncements on intellectual freedom and exchange of persons, and are chiding this government for what they call 'hypocrisy' in this field." President Truman's 1951 call to the president of the Soviet Presidium for "communication . . . free and open, across international boundaries" has been undercut by our own passport practices.

It is no answer to this damaging situation to cite the dangers of Communist couriers to our national security and to argue that government officials must be given "the benefit of the doubt" in this area. Recognition of the courier threat is only the first level of analysis, and the appeal to trust government administrators is an undisguised retreat from analysis. Every citizen, after all, could be a Communist courier, especially since vital information would not likely be risked with a known Communist or a vocal fellow-traveler. In resolving this dilemma between security and individual liberty, a society under law must adopt fair and constitutional standards, and must provide its citizens an opportunity to be heard. As the editors of the *Yale Law Journal* wrote: "Under the circumstances of modern international life every American citizen has a constitutional right to a passport, and the protection of that right has become an urgent matter of national policy as well as of civil liberty. If our preaching [internationally] is to accord with our practice, that right should be curtailed only for good cause and with that regard for fairness embodied in the phrase 'due process.'"

If, instead, we continue to employ vague and undefined political criteria, at the discretion of administrators, without hearing or review, our prestige will continue to suffer. As Professor Elmer Graper observed in describing "American Influence on the Attitudes of Western Europe" (*The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* November 1951): ". . . the blatant accusations against public officials, the demagogic rantings and posturings . . . these and similar excesses tend to arouse doubts about our political maturity and uncertainty as to who really speaks for America. They even raise the question whether in our zeal to fight subversion at home we are not succeeding merely in imitating some of the worst features of Communism abroad. A democratic nation that expects others to follow it must present to the world an example of democracy in practice, a democracy which not only advocates the doctrine of human rights and individual liberty but also lives up to that doctrine."

In the tent show of the cold war, we have a top-notch medicine wagon, a booming set of drums, and our patent remedy for the world's ills is labeled "Uncle Samuel's Democracy." If we adulterate our product in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the factory, however, we can expect to lose customers to another drummer even though he may be a complete charlatan.

HAVING outlined these three bases for the belief that we *do* defend our rights by protecting Communists, there remains the important inquiry into method. Clearly, when the liberal defends Communists, he must make an unequivocal distinction between the civil liberty involved and the individual or group concerned. He *must* defend the civil liberties of Eugene Dennis, but he need not take out a party card and condemn United Nations "germ warfare" to do so. Despite inferences to the contrary, most liberal organizations make exactly this distinction today. Briefs filed in the Supreme Court by such groups as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or the American Jewish Congress in cases involving the Communist party invariably begin with a clear statement explaining the interest the particular organization has, as liberal and anti-Communist, in preserving rights in the case at bar. When Senators begin using a Congressional committee as a personal bludgeon, liberals should attack this procedure whether Adrian Scott, Howard Fast, or Newbold Morris is under the klieg lights. But again, this is done through liberal organizations, as liberals, not through the Civil Rights Congress or a dummy "defense committee."

In his methods, the liberal must constantly apply the distinction between civil freedoms and anti-social acts. This is unquestionably a difficult task to perform in an age which demands solutions, not distinctions. But we cannot stop trying because of defeats, since despair will only allow broader violations of civil freedoms to develop in the vacuum of our fatigue. With "starch in our backbones," as Professor Edmund Cahn put it, we must stop the bullying of free America by waging *our* fight for the legitimate rights of every citizen. We must defend free speech for Communists: their right to call us "lackeys of imperialism" and "social fascists"; to picket the White House for aggression in Korea; to denounce the North Atlantic Treaty as Wall Street brokerage; and to preach that the Soviet Union is the land of economic milk and political honey. We must rip off the Paper Curtain which prevents citizens from traveling abroad, even though they may present views of America which will "embarrass" us at home. We must keep the soapbox and printing presses accessible; the ballot booth and meeting hall unlocked. But we do not have to allow theft of atomic secrets or acts of sabotage in industry, or need to ignore the political affiliations of those who staff our Central Intelligence Agency. This line of demarcation is the basis of the civil libertarian's position: when he succeeds in conveying its vitalness to the American people, he will have won the battle for civil liberties.

From our constitutional heritage, our social progress, and our responsibilities of international leadership comes the answer to Mr. Kristol's question—we defend the civil liberties of Communists to preserve our own rights and to advance the national welfare. Our civil freedoms in 1952 will remain "unconfused" as long as we recognize that, despite inflation, eternal vigilance is *still* the price of liberty.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"ANTI-SEMITISM" AND THE ROSENBERG CASE

The Latest Communist Propaganda Trap

LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ

THERE is something about Communist demonology that gives it a special power over large areas of the modern mind, and which insures that a vigorously conducted Communist propaganda campaign, no matter how flagrantly at variance with plain facts, will get some sort of hearing. This is especially the case when such a campaign can be fueled by the widespread anti-American sentiments that are fashionable in other countries—and even to be found in some circles in the United States. Thus, the accusation that the United States is in the hands of a warmongering Pentagon clique, with its citizens in a state of terror, and concentration camps and other fascist appurtenances just around the corner, is solemnly noted by more than a handful of self-styled "progressives" on these shores.

At the moment, the Communists have several propaganda campaigns under way, with varying effect. One of them is particularly noteworthy, not so much for its success (to date, it has had very little), but for its breath-taking mendacity and impudence. This campaign aims to persuade the world at large that the American government is in the hands of an anti-Semitic conspiracy which is inexorably working up to the extermination of American Jewry, and that the conviction of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg for espionage is a 1952 version of the Reichstag fire, prelude to an American version of Auschwitz.

The primary intention of this hullabaloo is, of course, to demonstrate that anti-Communism leads inevitably to anti-Semitism, and that the Truman administration, by resisting the march of world Communism, must thereby develop into a fascist regime. A secondary aim, no doubt, is to pick up sympathy and support from individual Jews who may be suckers for this particular bait—especially in its present underground stage the party needs non-Communist covers, which it hopes to find among "minorities" and the "liberal" intelligentsia. A possible third intention—and this is unprovable at the moment, though it is far from inconsistent with Communist strategy in other parts of the globe—is to further provoke the lunatic fringe of anti-Semites by confirming the equivalence of "Jew" and "Communist," thus creating fertile soil for the kind of bitter divisive strife that the Communists know so well how to exploit.

As has been said, so far this campaign has been anything but a signal success, nor is there any reason to believe it will become one. In any case, it is worth recording how this smear was born and how it grew—if only as a warning to some susceptible citizens, and to increase the general understanding of the mechanism of the Big Lie. There will be new ones, and not only in France and Indonesia. Not that the danger from this particular mendacious smear is over. As COMMENTARY goes to press, ads in the *Daily Worker* announce the major effort in the campaign to date, two mass meetings

---

ON MARCH 29, 1951, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted of atomic espionage, and it was thought that our society had dealt justly with a case of high treason. This did not reckon with the Communists who, after a period of absolute silence, suddenly discovered that the trial was nothing less than part of a nefarious anti-Semitic plot by the American government! Here, LUCY S. DAWIDOWICZ recounts the story of one of the most brazen recent efforts of the Communist apparatus to exploit "minority" fears and sympathies for its own purposes. Miss Dawidowicz, who studied at Hunter College and Columbia University, is on the staff of the Library of Jewish Information of the American Jewish Committee.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in New York, in Brooklyn and on the West Side of Manhattan.

THE first instance of a deliberate identification of anti-Communism as anti-Semitism came in the second half of 1950, in the case of eight New York public school teachers suspended because they had refused to deny Communist party membership. The *Daily Worker* wrote (September 21, 1950): "The campaign against the teachers, all of whom are Jewish, is part of a drive by the Catholic hierarchy against academic freedom and the Teachers Union."

The New York *Daily Compass*, which sometimes strays from the line but somehow seems never to leave the neighborhood, wrote: "If Superintendent Jansen gets away with the suspension of these eight teachers without adequate public protest, anti-Semitism will have been established as a guiding rule for the tax-paid educational system of the community which includes the largest number of Jews in the world."

A phantom group, the "Council of Jewish Organizations in Brownsville," protested to the Board of Education on this "manifestation of anti-Semitism," and news releases went out to the Jewish press, urging it to rise in protest. But the campaign to identify these teachers as Jewish was not violently promoted: the issue was local and most of the public was sufficiently aware of the true nature of the situation. This case may have been intended merely as a trial balloon to test the new technique; at any rate, the Communist campaign died down—but not for long.

SEVERAL months later the trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg for wartime atomic espionage took place. It was not discussed in the Communist press, just as the Coplon case, the Hiss case, and others had not been. It was the kind of story Communists did not talk about. Had a man from Mars alighted on this planet during February and March 1951, and read only the *Daily Worker*, he would not even have known about the Rosenbergs' trial. On March 30, 1951, the *Daily Worker* published its first news report on the case. This is the item in its entirety:

3 CONVICTED IN "ESPIONAGE" TRIAL

Two men and a woman were convicted here yesterday by a Federal Court jury on a charge of espionage for the Soviet Union during the war.

Those convicted were Julius Rosenberg, electrical engineer; his wife, Ethel, mother of two children; and Morton Sobell, electronics expert.

The main government witness was David Greenglass, brother of Mrs. Rosenberg.

This might have been the total extent of the Communist reaction to the Rosenberg case, obviously not easy to twist to propaganda purposes, had it not been for the reaction of the anti-Communist Yiddish press to the death sentence pronounced by the judge on April 5, 1951. None of these papers expressed doubt as to the guilt of the Rosenbergs; all voiced their revulsion at the crime. Their protest was restricted to what they considered an excessively harsh sentence in view of the punishment received by, for instance, Klaus Fuchs and Allan Nunn May. After the appearance of these articles in the outspokenly anti-Communist Yiddish press, the *Daily Worker*, the *Freiheit* (the Communist Yiddish daily newspaper), and the English-language Communist monthly *Jewish Life* commented on the death sentence, each time carefully drawing attention to the objections of non-Communists. The Communist press was still, at this point, handling the Rosenberg case very gingerly.

Four months later, on August 8, 1951, the fellow-traveling *National Guardian*, a "progressive weekly" of eight pages in tabloid form, announced that it would "expose the 'evidence' on which two beloved and respected American parents" had been sentenced to death. Two weeks later the *Guardian* began publication of a series of seven articles by a special correspondent, William A. Reuben, entitled: "The Rosenberg Conviction: Is This the Dreyfus Case of Cold War America?" The articles described the entire trial as one gigantic frame-up based on FBI collusion with a "self-confessed" spy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and "stool-pigeon," David Greenglass, in which the Rosenbergs were two "innocent" people who were "victims of a political frame-up designed to convince the public that Communists, or people who can be so labeled, are by their very existence a danger to the country's security and the people's safety." In these seven articles there was only one reference to the issue of "anti-Semitism," a sentence drawing attention to the lack of any Jew on the jury "in a city more than 30 per cent Jewish in population."*

As soon as Reuben's "exposé" was completed, the *National Guardian* announced the "spontaneous" formation of a "National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case," with Reuben as provisional chairman. Letters to the editor began to appear, tentatively exploiting the "Jewish" issue for the first time. Howard Fast wrote: "I think the case for the Rosenbergs as put forth by the *Guardian* is one of the most brilliant and daring pieces of journalism in our times. I not only take my hat off to you, but I wish, as an American Jew, to express my sincere gratitude and my homage for your fearless and unshakable integrity."

Albert Bein, another writer of the same political persuasion, wrote: "The Rosenbergs shall not die! Their freedom means your own salvation and mine. Raise your voices, all you Jews, both rich and poor!"

The "National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case" started its work by collecting funds to publish in pamphlet form Reuben's articles. It really began to function with a view to arousing mass feeling at the beginning of 1952, when Joseph Brainin took over the permanent chairmanship of the committee and recruited, it was claimed, 125 people whose names were to fill the committee's letterheads. (Brainin will be remembered for his connection with the Communist-front magazine *The Protestant*, and a host of other Communist-inspired enterprises.) And now the campaign began in earnest to turn the Rosenberg case into a *cause célèbre*.

IN JANUARY 1952, fully nine months after the conviction of the Rosenbergs, *Jewish Life* published an article by Louis Harap, "Anti-Semitism and the Rosenbergs," which declared: "A lowering cloud of anti-Semitism hangs over the death sentence of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg for alleged atomic espionage. . . . The death sentence and the entire case of the Rosenbergs must therefore be seen in the context of the threatening atomic war and the fascist and anti-Semitic dangers that are an integral part of this threatening war. To fight to reverse the death sentence against the Rosenbergs is to fight against the anti-Semitic implications of the whole affair."

On February 28, 1952, the *Daily Worker* chimed in: "The Rosenberg case is a ghastly political frame-up. It was arranged to provide blood victims to the witch-hunters, to open the door to new violence, anti-Semitism, and court lynchings of peace advocates and Marxists as 'spies.'"

Two weeks later, the Civil Rights Congress, which was already busy propagating the charge that the United States government, in its treatment of Negroes, was guilty of "genocide," issued a press release, distributed throughout the country with particular attention to the Anglo-Jewish press, calling for support of the Rosenberg defense. William L. Patterson, executive secretary, declared that "the Rosenberg frame-up is a new high in the growing anti-Semitism." He went on to say: "The lynching of these two innocent American Jews, unless stopped by the American people, will serve as a signal for a wave of Hitler-like genocidal attacks against the Jewish people throughout the United States. . . . The murder of the Rosenbergs will inevitably lead to new and fiercer attacks on Jewish synagogues such as we have seen in Florida,

*A check of 156 names impaneled for courtroom jury service on the Rosenberg case reveals that fifteen names were *obviously* Jewish. Of these, ten were excused by the court for personal reasons, four were challenged by the defense, and one was challenged by the government. There were probably other Jews on this panel, but only these fifteen names were clearly Jewish.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to more Hitler youth movements as have grown in Philadelphia."

After attacking the prosecutor and the trial judge and one of the justices of the Court of Appeals, all of whom happened to be Jewish, as "Quislings to the Jewish people" and declaring that their presence confirmed the "anti-Semitic nature of the government's death sentence" [!] the release concluded: "Stop the anti-Semitic legal lynching of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg!"

The "National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case" claims to have organized local committees in about twenty-five cities. Special efforts are being made to enlist the support of Jews at large, to place announcements and advertisements in Jewish newspapers, to win the sympathy of rabbis. One two-page circular is entitled "A Fact Sheet on Anti-Semitism in the Case," the only facts referred to being the absence of Jewish jurors and the presence of a Jewish judge.

No trick of demagogy has been ignored in this campaign. Rabbis have been circularized with a pathetic letter written by the nine-year-old son of the Rosenbergs, addressed to "Dear God and good people," in which the child writes that "Uncle David told lies to the judge and jury" about his parents. The wife of Morton Sobell, convicted with the Rosenbergs and sentenced to thirty years, has recorded a remarkable address, which, after branding the trial a frame-up, goes on to say how proud she is that her husband "stuck by his friends to the end." This address, presented by tape recording, forms the eerie climax of meetings now being held throughout the country, as frightening in their own divorce from reality as the meetings of anti-Semitic sects. A reporter present at one of them writes: "The general atmosphere was that of a minor conspiracy. Mingled expressions of fear, defiance, and importance characterized all present. . . . The theme of anti-Semitism and anti-minorityism, the threat of impending mass extermination and gas chambers, comparison to Nazi methods and policies, stood out as the major intention of this rally. 'If the Rosenbergs must die—then all Jews will have to die' was the thought with which people were sent home."

THIS particular meeting was in a large center of Jewish population, was well publicized, and attracted six hundred people. It was addressed by Mr. Reuben and a rabbi, among others. The rabbi was a rarity; for the Rosenberg campaign has been carried on in the face of strong attack by all leading Jewish communal agencies. This, of course, has resulted in the Communists' vilifying all bona fide Jewish leaders as "traitors." It was Ethel Rosenberg—clearly still regarding herself as under party discipline—who led off the attack on these alleged "traitors," after the Court of Appeals in a decision written by Jerome Frank had upheld the conviction of the lower court. Mrs. Rosenberg charged: "This is the way the *Judenrat* performed for the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto."

The characterization of leading Jewish organizations as a *Judenrat* has since been repeated with the persistent monotony of Communist propaganda. *Jewish Life*, in its May 1952 issue, expatiated at length on the "Rise of an American 'Judenrat'": "The *Judenrat* in the ghettos was created, as the German title implies, *by the Nazis* to further *their interests* in the Jewish community. Under present conditions in our country, pro-fascist reaction is not yet capable of appointing Jewish *Gauleiters* on a broad scale. However, we are witnessing a new development, different from the ghetto-*Judenrat* in that Jewish leaders are *themselves* assuming the function of the *Judenrat* serving the interests of growing fascism as agents within the Jewish community. . . . As emboldened fascist elements grow more powerful, the American version of the *Judenrat* becomes bolder in its betrayal. We, who still have it in our hands to keep fascism from developing in our country, can also reject the *Judenrat* before it becomes the dominant force in the Jewish community. We must reject the blind 'anti-Communist' line—reminiscent of Hitlerism—behind which the *Judenrat* seeks to lead the Jewish people to destruction."

This description of Jewish organizations,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of a piece with the long-time Communist smear campaign against responsible Jewish leadership as reactionary, fascist-collaborating oligarchs and conspiratorial enemies both of democracy and their own oppressed people, has been applied to the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Jewish Labor Committee, local Jewish community councils and community centers, the B'nai B'rith, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, and a host of other Jewish organizations.

IT IS obvious that the Communists, by such propaganda, aim to enlist Jews in defense of Communists and their interests. But it is equally obvious—or should be—that the Communists are also engaged in an insidious campaign, which if it succeeded could only serve to establish guilt (though they call it "innocence") by false association. Because a spy or a Communist is a Jew, the Communists proclaim that all Jews are collectively involved. More—the Communists take it upon themselves to make this involvement a reality, so far as their powers permit. That, in the process, great damage may be done to American Jews, far from restraining the Communists, seems only to encourage them. It is well to be on guard; we have seen how similar campaigns of identification and accusation have strengthened the hands of anti-Semitic forces elsewhere.

DEATH OF A GRANDMOTHER

HARVEY SHAPIRO

LET me borrow her corpse a little.
Over that clown in finest linen,
Over that white-dressed dummy, pretty girl,
(Dressed for a party, the daughters cried)
Let me speak a line.

The dead lie in a ditch of fear,
In an earth wound, in an old mouth
That has sucked them there.
My grandmother drank tea, and wailed
As if the Wailing Wall kissed her head
Beside the kitchen window;
While the flaking, green-boxed radio
Retailed in Yiddish song
And heartache all day long.
Or laughter found her,
The sly, sexual humor of the grave.

Yet after her years of dragging leg,
Of yellowed sight,
She still found pain enough
To polish off the final hours with a shriek.
To what sweet kingdom do the old
Jews go?
Now mourned by her radio and bed,
She wishes me health and children,
Who am her inheritor.

I sing her a song of praise.
She meddled with my childhood
Like a witch, and I can meet her
Curse for curse in that slum heaven where
we go
When this American dream is spent—
To give her a crust of bread, a little love.

HARVEY SHAPIRO, who had a poem in our May issue, has published poetry in *Poetry, Hopkins Review, Tomorrow,* and numerous other periodicals. He was born in Chicago in 1924, and attended Yale and Columbia universities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE VANISHING JEW OF OUR POPULAR CULTURE

The Little Man Who Is No Longer There

HENRY POPKIN

IN Auden and Isherwood's play *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, a modern knight-errant bound upon a sacred quest encounters a sinister financier named Grabstein. Grabstein has cornered the rubber market, started a war in Spitzbergen, and "practically owns South America"—no one could possibly mistake him for anything but a satirical composite of every absurdity of the anti-Semitic imagination.

In 1948, however, when the group, the Interplayers, presented a lively production of *The Dog Beneath the Skin* in New York, Grabstein became a ruddy, white-haired Englishman named Mansfield, and with the loss of the archetypal quality of the Jewish "international financier" the character became quite pointless. The unusual element in this case was the fact that it involved an avant-garde play and a sophisticated little-theater audience. For what may be called "de-Semitization" is by now a commonplace in the popular arts. There has grown up an unwritten law that makes the Jew the little man who isn't there. This law originates not in hate, but in a misguided benevolence—or fear; its name is "sha-sha." At its most effective, the taboo banishes all Jewish characters, all Jewish names, the word "Jew" itself. If we pretend that the Jew does not exist, the reasoning goes, then he will not be noticed; the anti-Semite, unable to find his victim, will simply forget about him.

The policy of concealing Jews has itself been so well concealed that it is seldom mentioned in print. One of the rare discussions of it occurs in Ben Hecht's *A Guide for the Bedevilled* (1944). Hecht writes: "The greatest single Jewish phenomenon in our country in the last twenty years has been the almost complete disappearance of the Jew from American fiction, stage, radio and movies."

The source of this phenomenon, as of so many others in Jewish life today, is Hitler. When Hitler forced Americans to take anti-Semitism seriously, it was apparently felt that the most eloquent reply that could be made was a dead silence: the American answer to the banishment of Jews from public life in Germany was the banishment of Jewish figures from the popular arts—in the United States.

THE process has not been so thorough as Hecht suggests. In the comic strips, Harry Hershfield's *Abie the Agent* and the dialect strips of Milt Gross continued to be published despite Hitler; still, when Hershfield eventually did give up his comic-strip history of a Jewish businessman, he is said to have promised to revive it when times were "better" for the Jews. Little Mr. Guggenheim figured in *The Nebbs* until that strip was discontinued, and "In and Out of the Red with Sam" occasionally turned up in Wortman's *Metropolitan Movies*. But neither in the "serious" comic strips nor in the increasingly rare "comic" comic strips are any other Jewish characters much in evi-

---

HENRY POPKIN here describes and analyzes one of the most striking phenomena in our popular culture of recent years: the disappearance of Jewish characters, Jewish comedy, and Jewish problems, in short the virtual elimination of a whole area of American life, from treatment in the popular arts. Mr. Popkin has written on literature and the drama for *Kenyon Review*, *Theatre Arts*, the *New Republic* and numerous other publications. His most recent article in COMMENTARY, "Elmer Rice: The Triumph of 'Mr. Zero,'" was published in the March 1951 issue. Mr. Popkin was born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1924. He received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1951.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dence as a necessary element of the plot or social landscape. The only instance I can find goes back a good many years, and even there the Jewish character is fenced around with reticence. Once Little Orphan Annie, the celebrated "reactionary orphan," befriended a bearded tailor who bore some such name as David or Joseph. One of those proud, large-bosomed matrons who abound in *Little Orphan Annie* was horrified that the tailor should be accepted socially, and protested to one of Annie's friends: "But you can't! Don't you realize that he's a ———!" Fortunately, she was interrupted before she could utter the obscene word "Jew," and Annie's friend broke in: "He's a—fine man!"

A similar situation prevails in the comic books. "Comic" publications specializing in real-life stories have featured illustrated biographies of Irving Berlin, Bernard Baruch, Mordecai Noah, Judah Touro, Daniel Mendoza, Selman A. Waksman, and others, often with the hand of "Jewish defense" showing all too plainly, but the more numerous, more popular, and less inhibited comic books get along without Jewish characters altogether.

Even newspaper columnists tend to avoid Jewish references, often going far out of their way to avoid the word that must not be spoken. Walter Winchell, who used to print dialect jokes featuring one Max Mefoofsky, has since 1947 been campaigning against dialect stories with all the virtuous intolerance of a fallen woman reformed. Leonard Lyons, already noted as a spoiler of good stories, seems lately to have extended his talent to denaturing obviously Jewish anecdotes.

IN POCKET reprint editions of novels, now selling in astronomical numbers all over the country, the process of "de-Semitization" has had a growing effect. The reasoning behind this policy is that these inexpensive reprints are more likely than the original editions to fall into the hands of readers who will discover anti-Semitism, perhaps where it does not exist, and will either sympathize or be offended—equally undesirable reactions. Thus, in the Avon Books reprint of Irving Shulman's novel of juvenile delinquency in Brooklyn, *The Amboy Dukes*, every trace of Jewish reference is eliminated. Bar Mitzvah becomes "confirmation," and remarks about kosher meat are deleted; Goldfarb becomes Abbott, Semmel becomes Saunders, etc., etc. And yet the novel would seem to have little power for harm—in its original form it says no more than that Jews, like other groups in America, have the problem of juvenile delinquency.

It was more logical for the same publisher to "de-Semitize" Jerome Weidman's *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* in its pocket edition. The Avon editors have toned down the more striking Jewish names and Jewish references: Meyer Babushkin is renamed Michael Babbin, Pulvermacher becomes the more euphonious Pulsifer, the hero's mother calls him Hershie instead of Heshie (does this make him less Jewish?) and feeds him pancakes instead of *blintzes*. Perhaps, in view of the enormous and uncritical audience reached by pocket editions, these changes were justified, since the principal impression conveyed by the novel is of the total depravity of its emphatically Jewish main character: Harry Bogen may be said to add a new chapter in moral corruption to the ancient stereotype of the merciless sharp trader, where the boys of *The Amboy Dukes* are only petty criminals of the type familiar among all groups in slum neighborhoods. But once concealment is accepted, publishers prefer to play safe. There lies the danger.

The Bantam Books edition of Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock* falls somewhere between these extremes. The anti-Semitism that Greene displays in some of his early novels apparently belongs—or once belonged—to him as well as to his characters. In *Brighton Rock*, however, Jewish references are pretty much confined to the identification of Colleoni, the master racketeer, as a Jew, and to the fact that in the elegant hotel where he lives a "Jewess" sniffs "bitchily" at the poorly dressed hoodlum who is the novel's chief character. This sort of thing is not calculated to please any friend of the Jews, but it is more annoying than vicious. Still, the pub-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lisher of the Bantam edition changed "Jew" to "man" and assimilated the Jewess as a blonde.

In the performing arts, the Broadway theater suffers least from self-consciousness of this sort. Partly this is because the dramatist retains considerable control over his work; a more important fact is that plays are written for the adult theater-going audience of New York, where playwrights and the public are reconciled to the existence of the Jews and think their stage representation neither exotic nor obscene. In fact, a Jewish character in a Broadway play or revue often seems as much a local reference as a statement about the topography of Columbus Circle.

Nevertheless, many plays that touch on Jewish themes are likely to suffer from an awkwardness that is the result of excessive self-consciousness. This past season exemplifies the pattern. *Stalag 17* and *The Number* presented Jewish characters without apologies, but without much art either. One of the main figures in Truman Capote's *The Grass Harp* was Dr. Morris Ritz, prototype of the city slicker, but in the play, unlike the novel, no one called him "Jew." Both *Paris '90* and *I Am a Camera* offered conventional statements of philo-Semitic themes in connection with, respectively, the Dreyfus case and Hitler. Still, if there was a lack of originality, together with an overplus of reticence, if there was a failure to show convincingly any part of a hostile environment, at least there was not silence.

To be sure, our growing reticence about Jews may have deeper effects, whose extent it is impossible to measure. Sometimes, one suspects, there is a kind of pre-censorship, often unconscious, that does its work inside the mind of a playwright. Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* might be cases in point; in spite of their vaguely Protestant and "Anglo-Saxon" atmosphere, both plays strike some familiar Jewish chords in their treatment of business life and family relations and often in the cadences of their dialogue; George Ross makes an interesting detailed case for *Death of a Salesman* as an essentially Jewish play in his article "'Death of a Salesman' in the Original" (COMMENTARY, February 1951).

The Jewish dialect comedian who once flourished in the theater, the movies, radio, and, more recently, in television, is likewise disappearing. Some specimens of the type were seen briefly on Broadway in the two Yiddish-American revues aimed at the Jewish market, but the best of the tribe live in semi-retirement, like Lou Holtz, or are dead, like Willie Howard and George Sidney.

The tradition of these comedians goes back to at least the turn of the century, when David Warfield's black-bearded, derby-wearing peddler fixed the general outlines; for years, young Jewish comedians were invariably billed as "the second David Warfield." Like Warfield, many of these were on some occasions "Dutch" comedians, but the differences between the Jews and the "Dutch" were minimal. "Dutch" meant, of course, German, and George Jean Nathan has pointed out the interesting fact that a great deal of "Dutch" comedy became Jewish during the First World War because of the unpopularity of everything German; another war has now accelerated the disappearance of that comic vein. The first full-length Jewish-dialect comedy to win wide popularity was *Potash and Perlmutter*, produced in 1913, the longest-running play of its season; its sequels came just in time to profit from the anti-German feeling of the war years. In any case, however, the Jewish comedians and their plays soon found a large audience.

In some instances "Dutch" and Jewish comedies were the creation of the same authors, as well as the same actors. Aaron Hoffman, who was most prolific in the 1920's, wrote plays for both comic types. His *Politics* bears on its title page the legend "as played by Kolb and Dill," one of the "Dutch" teams of the Weber-and-Fields tradition. Hoffman's *Give and Take* (1923) was originally "Dutch," though the leading

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

roles were created by Louis Mann and George Sidney, who were also Jewish comedians; when the play was adapted and revived in 1943 as *All for All,* the Germans had with no great difficulty been changed to Jews, and the ebullient Harry Green played Sidney's part. Hoffman also wrote *Welcome Stranger,* a comedy about anti-Semitism which originally starred Sidney, and *Two Blocks Away,* from which was taken the first movie of the Cohens-and-Kellys series, featuring the ubiquitous George Sidney as Cohen.

Hoffman's comedies, the Potash-and-Perlmutter plays, and such other examples of the genre as Anne Nichols' *Abie's Irish Rose* are little more than commercial attempts to capitalize on comic dialects. What art most of them had seems to have been imparted by the actors. George Sidney, Harry Green, Alexander Carr (who created the role of Mawruss Perlmutter), and their fellow comedians of the revues, Willie Howard, Lou Holtz, Fanny Brice, and Smith and Dale, were all expert performers. There is no end of critical testimonials, but perhaps I may cite Richard Watts Jr.'s review of one of the Cohens-and-Kellys movies in the New York *Herald Tribune,* where he observed that it was "not far from anti-Irish propaganda to have the Irishman played by Charlie Murray, while so good an actor as George Sidney appears as the Jewish partner," at the same time that he called the picture "the dullest comedy that has yet been produced in . . . California." Most of these actors were at their best when they used their own material, Smith and Dale in *Dr. Kronkheit,* Harry Green in *The Cherry Tree,* Lou Holtz and Willie Howard in their Sam Lapidus and Pierre Ginzburg routines.

THOSE Jewish comedians who remain still make occasional appearances on the stage and on television, and they have been heard over the radio. The movies have been almost entirely closed to them for nearly twenty years. (A rare exception was the recent appearance of Smith and Dale in the movie *Two Tickets to Broadway.*) The principal reason for this difference is the fact that radio and television sprang up in the shadow of Broadway, in the mainstream of a freer tradition that could still recognize and present foreigners and foreign accents without excessive self-consciousness or reticence. Lou Holtz and Willie Howard made frequent guest appearances with Rudy Vallee; such characters as "Schlepperman" and later "Mr. Kitzel" have appeared on the Jack Benny program; Fanny Brice did "Jewish" monologues (before she became completely identified with Baby Snooks); and there have been Fred Allen's Mrs. Nussbaum, Henry Burbidge, *The Goldbergs* (not all of the actors were comedians, but Menasha Skulnik and Arnold Stang would surely qualify). *Potash and Perlmutter* and *Abie's Irish Rose* were the basis of mercifully short-lived dramatic serials, and there was once a comedy series about a detective named Cohen who had an assistant named Dr. Wasserman.

But the fog of concealment has been creeping over these areas too. At least one Jewish radio comedian seems to have fallen victim to the complaints of hypersensitive listeners: according to Alistair Cooke, Lou Holtz had to go off the air when his act was, incredibly, accused of being anti-Semitic. Apparently, most of the leading Jewish "dialecticians" have been objects of complaint at one time or another, and—to mention a more directly cultural factor—the Jewish comedian in his best embodiments is in any case out of step with the industrialized techniques of gag files and joke conferences that now rule.

On television, to be sure, there has been a kind of renascence, and perhaps we may hope it will endure, though one suspects that the chief factor has been simply television's gargantuan need for material. Smith and Dale have made guest appearances, *The Goldbergs* has become a popular dramatic series, Menasha Skulnik briefly had his own program, and the new medium found its own Jewish comedian in Sam Levenson. (The main reason for considering Milton Berle a Jewish comedian is his occasional use of such a phrase as "for two cents plain."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The querulous, skeptical city types played by Arnold Stang have a better claim to a place in the Jewish comic tradition.) Some of these actors have been sadly handicapped by a lack of material; Skulnik in particular was victimized by the threadbare skits that were written for him. Only Levenson has exhibited a fresh and personal flair in his adaptations of Jewish stories and his discourses on family life. But even he is so strongly aware of the hostile forces of "shasha" that in the preface to his book *Meet the Folks* he anticipates his critics by disclaiming some of the traditional elements of Jewish humor. One of his least persuasive disavowals is his rejection of stories about the "little Jew." I for one cannot see why such stories are, as Levenson puts it, "fundamentally anti-Semitic"—would we be somehow better or more sympathetic if we were a race of giants? Levenson goes on to assure his readers that he has "tried to keep the stories within the great Hebrew-Christian tradition of the goodness and the dignity of man." Fortunately Levenson is not as good as his word. The stories in *Meet the Folks* are not all concerned with oversized models of goodness and dignity.

Whatever may happen in the future, one fact is encouraging: in television, as in radio during its heyday, there prevails what might be called the New York idea, that Jewishness is not freakish or embarrassing and there might as well be Jewish comedians as any other kind. Hence one finds the sort of Jewish reference, whether comic or not, that stands in refreshing contrast to the rest of our antiseptically "Aryanized" popular culture: a Yiddish phrase spoken, a Jewish dialect or intonation, an identifiably Jewish ironic quality, or—to get away from comedy—a "detective" play about a dress business run by a Mr. Alpert in the garment district, another about the return of a prodigal son on the Seder eve, and adaptations of Elmer Rice's *Counsellor-at-Law* and Samson Raphaelson's *The Jazz Singer*. All of this expresses no attitude, breaks no lances against anti-Semitism; it only recognizes one fact of experience: that the Jews do exist.

THE blight has fallen most heavily on the movies. It was not ever thus. Time was when Groucho Marx, in *Animal Crackers*, could sing "My name is Captain Spalding, the African explorer," and add under his breath, "Did someone call me *shnorer*?" And when James Cagney could find a moment to make a proud display of his knowledge of Yiddish. In her recent autobiography, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse*, Anzia Yezierska tells how Samuel Goldwyn brought her to Hollywood to work on the silent movie version of her story of Jewish life, *Hungry Hearts*; she was dismayed at being joined by Montague Glass, author of *Potash and Perlmutter*, who was commissioned to turn *Hungry Hearts* into a "Jew-play" with a happy ending. *The Cohens and the Kellys*, in 1926, was one of the biggest box-office hits, and its heroes accordingly had further film adventures in Paris, Africa, Atlantic City, and Hollywood; in addition, there were film versions of *Potash and Perlmutter*, *Welcome Stranger* (less attractive than the original), and *Abie's Irish Rose*. And no one who knows the history of the movies needs to be told that the first talkie (actually part talking and part silent), *The Jazz Singer*, featured Al Jolson as a Jewish boy who was being brought up to be a cantor, but left the synagogue to become a popular entertainer.

If the scripts were usually uninspired, there were actors, on the screen as on the stage, who sometimes rose above their material, especially after talking pictures brought more of the stage comedians to Hollywood. In Hollywood George Sidney repeated his early stage success, and so did Harry Green, who had been one of the "second David Warfields" of years ago. Gregory Ratoff was identified with Jewish roles; as late as 1932 it was announced that he would play the lead in Samuel Ornitz's novel of Jewish life, *Haunch, Paunch, and Jowl*, but the picture was never made. George E. Stone made a career of playing young Jews. In the late 20's and early 30's, these four, along with the veteran Alexander Carr, were among the busiest comedians

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and character actors. The monologuists and revue comedians never got very far in pictures, possibly because they could not make their comic antics conform to the dull stereotypes of movie characters and the dubious logic of movie plots; Willie Howard, like Smith and Dale, was assigned principally to making short features.

But comedians were not the only Jewish types to be seen in the movies of that earlier period. When *Svengali* was produced in 1931 with John Barrymore, and *Oliver Twist* in 1922 with Lon Chaney and again in 1933 with Irving Pichel, no protests seriously threatened the films' distribution, even though the villains were visibly Jewish. There were tear-jerkers about Jews—*Symphony of Six Million* (with Ratoff), *No Greater Love* (with Carr), and the silent *Humoresque*. There were screen adaptations of plays, including *Counsellor-at-Law* (with John Barrymore), *Once in a Lifetime* (with Ratoff), *The Last Mile* (with Stone), *Kibitzer* (with Green), *The Yellow Ticket* (with Elissa Landi as the Jewish heroine), and *Street Scene*, in all of which the Jewish characters were preserved intact. A few pictures—for example *The House of Rothschild*—defended the Jews against anti-Semites. I remember vividly, also, a DeMille movie called *This Day and Age*, about the murder of a Jewish tailor by a racketeer and the effort of some high school students to bring the killer to justice. The victim was a conventional, pious figure played by a relatively subdued Harry Green; a Jewish student mourning him after his death recalls that the tailor used to make *tsimmes* for him.

THEN came the great retreat. By 1935 most of the Jewish comedians had vanished from the screen. Harry Green was in seven movies in 1934 and none in 1935; since leaving Hollywood he has spent most of his time in England, appearing occasionally on Broadway and making two movies in 1940. George Sidney retired from movie-making in 1935, reappearing just once more in 1937 and also acting on Broadway. Gregory Ratoff and George E. Stone became less identified with Jewish parts, and Ratoff ultimately came to be a director. Alexander Carr's story was the saddest. He was very busy in Hollywood till 1934; after that he couldn't get a part. At the end of 1938 he turned up in New York to entertain at a Jewish night club, returned to Hollywood in 1940 to appear in Preston Sturges's *Christmas in July*, and died in 1946, having made only one picture in the last twelve years of his life.

The comic villain of George S. Kaufman's *The Butter and Egg Man*, a character named Lehman, retained his original name when the play was filmed under its own title in 1928 and as *The Tenderfoot* in 1934; but in 1937, when the play became *Dance, Charlie, Dance*, he was named Morgan, and in 1940, when the play had another metamorphosis as *An Angel from Texas*, he became Allen. (One is reminded of the story of the Jew who changed his name from Ginzburg to Cartwright and then from Cartwright to Pendleton, so that if he was asked what his name was before it was Pendleton, he could say "Cartwright.") When *The Front Page* was filmed in 1931, the Governor's befuddled but honest emissary kept the name he had in the original play—Irving Pincus; in the second movie version, *His Girl Friday*, he was called Joe Pettibone. When Clifford Odets's *Golden Boy* was filmed, the boxing promoter Roxie Gottlieb became Roxie Lewis, possibly because the part had been created on the stage by Robert Lewis.

Often the changes have taken the form of eliminating Jewish villains—a practice which may be defensible as good public-relations practice in behalf of the Jews, but might well have boomerang effects if it should appear that Jews were the sole beneficiaries. Italians still furnish most movie gangsters, and this emphasis has been particularly obvious since the Kefauver hearings; other nationalities also make visible contributions to the ranks of villains. However, when *Kind Lady* was filmed in 1936, the French antique dealer, a by no means unsympathetic character, had his name changed from Rosen-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

berg to Roubet; in the latest movie version of this play he is called Malaquaise. Similar examples are numerous.

British movie-makers, despite their boner with *Oliver Twist,* have been learning fast. When Somerset Maugham's story "The Alien Corn" was filmed as part of *Quartet,* the important factor of Jewish origin in the troubles of the Bland family and the son's revolt was completely dropped. The change made in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* was perhaps more justifiable, for here it was a murderer—albeit an amiable one—whose origin was altered. The main character's mother in the film was made to cut herself off from her noble family by marrying an Italian, whereas in the original novel, Roy Horniman's *Israel Rank,* she alienates her relatives by marrying a Jew.

More disturbing than the disappearance of one Jewish character here and another there, is the absence of recognizable Jews in films that *require* their presence. Elliot Paul and Luis Quintanilla, in their study of Hollywood conventions, *With a Hays Nonny Nonny,* suggest that a Hollywood producer might film the Biblical story of Esther as a tale of Nazi oppression of the Czechs: "It would be bad for the public to get the idea the Nazis are persecuting Jews. . . . In the eyes of the producers, it is even worse to show a Jew in clover than one in the soup up to his eyes. The solution is not to show him at all. He becomes a Czech or some kind of Central European the 40,000,000 [movie-goers] can view impersonally."

By this sort of logic, Hollywood frequently excluded the issue of anti-Semitism from movies attacking the Nazi movement. A few films did show anti-Semitism as a part of Nazism, following the novels or plays on which they were based with at least a reasonable fidelity: *The Mortal Storm, Tomorrow the World, Address Unknown.* But only a few years before, reports had come out of Hollywood that the issue of anti-Semitism was eliminated from the script of *Three Comrades* over the protests of the authors of the screen play, one of whom was F. Scott Fitzgerald. And the British-made *Mr. Emmanuel,* generally regarded as the first movie to attack Nazi anti-Semitism, was thought so revolutionary that it was publicized with such slogans as "A daring picture on a daring subject" and "Have you got the nerve to see this picture?"

Even plays and novels telling stories of Jewish life were "de-Semitized." In John Howard Lawson's *Success Story,* filmed in 1934 as *Success at Any Price,* Ginsburg became Martin and Glassman became Griswold, with Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Colleen Moore acting these leading roles, which had been played on Broadway by Luther and Stella Adler; a happy ending helped to prettify the proceedings. Later, when Irwin Shaw's parable of tyranny and revolt, *The Gentle People,* was filmed under the title *Out of the Fog,* the Jewish tailor Goodman turned into an Irish tailor named Goodwin. Aben Kandel's novel of Jewish life, *City for Conquest,* was made the basis of a movie of Irish life. The play *Home of the Brave* dealt with the psychological problems of a Jewish soldier; the movie made him a Negro, burdened with precisely the same problems. (At about the same time, seeking to make a movie about anti-Semitism, Hollywood picked up a novel called *The Brick Foxhole,* which was about the murder of a non-Jewish homosexual, and turned it into *Crossfire.* Go know!) When *Mr. Skeffington* was faithfully translated to the screen in 1944, the reviewer for the New York *Herald Tribune* specifically commended the film because "it is not afraid to identify Skeffington by race and religion."

Pushing further into the area of distinctively Jewish subject matter, the movie-makers watered down the Jewish elements of the New York garment industry in the greatly altered film version of Jerome Weidman's novel *I Can Get It for You Wholesale.* The movie also cleaned up the personal ethics of the book's principal character (besides changing him into a woman: Harry Bogen became Harriet Boyd). Even the Borscht Belt and the Old Testament have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not escaped. In *Having Wonderful Time*, based on Arthur Kober's play, the Catskill vacationers became, as the disappointed Frank S. Nugent put it in the New York *Times*, *"alle goyim."* Typical campers were Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Ginger Rogers; Stern became Shaw, Kessler became Kirkland, Aaronson was Armbruster, Sam Rappaport was Emil Beatty, and, in short, it seemed most unlikely that this particular summer hotel should really be located in the Catskills. Likewise, neither Hebrews nor Israelites are ever mentioned in DeMille's *Samson and Delilah;* instead, Samson persistently reminds us of his loyalty to the Tribe of Dan; we never hear of any larger social unit to which Dan belonged. The makers of *Quo Vadis* could be a little bolder, perhaps because they proceeded on the assumption that a movie with a Christian theme and offering Peter and Paul as its only Jewish characters has by its very nature disarmed the (nominally Christian) anti-Semite. *Quo Vadis* shows us a Paul not unlike the anti-Semite's traditional concept of the large-nosed, black-bearded Jew, and has him identify himself as a rabbi. "Despise him if you dare," the incipient anti-Semite is implicitly admonished, "but remember that this Jew is Saint Paul."

BEYOND the more conscious desire to avoid inciting anti-Semitism, another motive that operates less consciously in suppression of Jewish elements in films is simply the desire to prettify, to depict life without discordant, heterogeneous elements. Jews are an intrusion; they do not belong to the pretty picture. Their presence is suppressed just as other odd, unsightly things are suppressed. Thus in *Golden Boy*, the hero's distinctive physical mark was changed from crossed eyes to curly hair for the same reason that the name Gottlieb was changed to Lewis—for beauty's sake. Similarly, in *The Glass Menagerie* Garfinkel's delicatessen was changed to Schultz's for the same reason that Mrs. Wingfield was made to speak of "stomach trouble" instead of "cancer of the stomach."

Where the unsightly Jews must be present, it is often felt necessary to conceal their peculiarities in a cloud of other peculiarities: Jews may be strange, some films seem to say, but other people are strange too —strangeness itself is made a form of the familiar. Often the Irish seem to offer the handiest camouflage. Thus in *The Lost Weekend* Don Birnam must walk along Third Avenue desperately seeking a pawnshop where he can sell his typewriter. In the novel he discovers from two Jews "in their Sunday-best" that all pawnshops are closed for Yom Kippur, and that ends the conversation. In the movie he cries: "What about Kelly's and Gallagher's?"—a rather unlikely question. "We've got an agreement," he is told. "They keep closed on Yom Kippur and we don't open on St. Patrick's"—the inference being that closing on St. Patrick's Day is a regular practice among Americans of Irish descent. Here, as in such plays as *Abie's Irish Rose* and *Two Blocks Away*, the message of "tolerance" comes to us at second hand, and the Irish, whose acceptance is taken for granted, are made buffers for the Jews: Jews are a bit peculiar, so the argument seems to go, but they are after all no more outlandish than the Irish.

This "buffer system" seems also to supply the logic behind those "cross section" films where Jews are self-consciously presented as "part of America," engaged with their fellow Americans in some common task. In recent years the common task has often been World War II, and with extraordinary regularity the typical "service picture" would present Americans united in military action but showing their diverse backgrounds in their accents, their names, and their recollections of home. Along with the Texan, the man from Brooklyn, the Americans of Irish, Italian, and Slavic descent, occasionally a Negro, there might be a Jew. Such pictures as *A Walk in the Sun, The Purple Heart, Guadalcanal Diary, Air Force, Action in the North Atlantic, Sands of Iwo Jima,* and *Bataan* all belong to this category of "minority" abstractions, and they all admit the Jew into the cross section (of *Bataan*, the New York

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Times reviewer observed: "Thomas Mitchell plays his usual Irish iron-man, even though he is called Corporal Jake Feingold"). In most of these films, the characterization of the Jewish figure is fairly perfunctory, but no more or less so than the characterization of most of the other service men. Wayne Greenbaum, the clever ironic City College graduate played by Sam Levene in *The Purple Heart,* is probably the best portrait in the gallery; most of the others are virtually interchangeable.

The Miracle of the Bells and a few other movies have introduced the "cross section" on a primarily religious basis; more often some melodrama will thrust a Jewish name into its list of detectives. A screen writer named Sydney Boehm has used such a character, almost as a kind of private signature, in one film after another (e.g., *The Undercover Man, Union Station,* and *The Atomic City*). Boehm's Jewish detective is little more than a name, but I am told that he is introduced deliberately as a contribution toward making the Jew a "natural" part of the social scene, a person taken for granted as one American among many others. This is, in general, the estimable intention of the "cross section" movie; too often, however, the mechanical configuration of such a movie betrays it as only a more complex example of suppression.

ONE more detective movie deserves to be mentioned here: *Where the Sidewalk Ends,* from a screen play by Ben Hecht, who, as his *Guide for the Bedevilled* testifies, has a special interest in the return of the Jew to the movies. Hecht goes at this task with a vengeance, presenting a sympathetic detective named Klein, who is the embattled hero's best friend; Klein's wife Shirley, who conforms to a popular but well-intentioned stereotype by being superficially ungenerous but proving ultimately to have a heart of gold; an unregenerate gangster named Sid Kramer; a dress manufacturer named Friedman who seems pleasant enough but who unjustly discharges the heroine when she becomes involved in a murder; and a key witness, a Mrs. Tribaum, who is a friendly, elderly widow. This movie is in fact not very good, but it does succeed in putting across the revolutionary (for Hollywood) idea that the Jews simply are *there* in the community, capable of the same strengths and the same weaknesses as others. (Another common-sense natural treatment of Jewish characters that deserves mention is *Body and Soul,* a movie about a Jewish prize fighter.)

In *It's a Big Country,* one of the most ardently inoffensive of the "cross section" films, there is a "Negro episode" in which, instead of a professionally acted story, we see newsreel clips of Negro dignitaries, while the spoken commentary tells us that these are "Americans" in every walk of life; the word "Negro" is not used—one would never guess from the sound track what the episode is about. As one might expect after this display of discretion, the "Jewish episode" never mentions Jews. An American soldier home from Korea calls on the mother of a friend who has been killed in action. The mother is hospitable until she learns that the soldier's name is Maxie Klein, but her hostility changes back to friendliness when he reads a letter from her son in which the son urges the necessity of having "allies." Klein is of course a satisfactorily neutral name; the mother never mentions the cause of her hostility, and Maxie never refers to it. The letter he reads is at a respectful, discreet distance from the subject at hand. One wonders how many of those the film wished to influence for the better even got the point of this episode.

Crossfire and *Gentleman's Agreement,* though they presented their messages more clearly, suffered likewise from an excess of discretion. Bent on showing that Jews are just like everyone else, these films so neutralized their Jewish characters as to deprive them of all reality. Indeed, in *Gentleman's Agreement,* it will be recalled, the main "Jewish" character is simply a Gentile who calls himself a Jew so he can write a series of articles called "I Was Jewish for Eight Weeks." And *Crossfire* simply failed to characterize fully the Jewish victim of prejudice;

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

evidently the makers of the movie were so concerned to enlist everybody's sympathies on his side that they feared the results of endowing him with any specific traits other than a vague benevolence. They did not allow Sam Levene to give the typical performance he has sometimes been permitted to give, even in the movies, apparently because they did not want it said that he was "too Jewish."

It is certain that the important role played by Jews in the movie industry, and some sensitivity about the large financial rewards the industry has brought them, have, especially since Hitler, contributed to the establishment of the "tradition" of suppression, evasion, and sugar-coating that I have described.* There has also been pressure from Jewish organizations, often more energetic than effective. And there has been support from the Hays code, which went into effect in 1934 and which provides that no religion shall be ridiculed; under the code, Jews are regarded as members of a religious group. The avowed intention of the policy has been laudable: to combat anti-Semitism. But there is in it also a great deal of stuffiness, timidity, and plain lack of imagination, which, when it is allowed to predominate, produces a culture of stereotypes and uniformity.

We are entitled to ask, too, whether the policy does not even defeat its primary purpose. Do not these restrictions and concealments make the Jew, in the eyes of the anti-Semite or the potential anti-Semite, more menacing and mysterious than ever—a figure so powerful that he can cause his image and his very name to vanish when it serves his purposes? The disappearance of the Jew from the popular arts inevitably inspires the question, especially among the prejudiced: what does he have to hide?

If the creators of our popular culture believe in a world in which the Jew exists, let them show such a world. Let the Jew come back, not as apologist or walking object lesson, not as a generalized focus for sentiments of tolerance or as a public-relations representative of his people, but the man himself in all his concreteness—his strengths and his weaknesses—the human being he used to be.

*In Ludwig Bemelmans' *Dirty Eddie*, a satirical novel about Hollywood, a delegation of Jews comes every year "to tell Moses and a couple of others that they shouldn't allow themselves to be paid the biggest salaries in the country. They say it is bad for the Jews."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE LOAN

A Story

BERNARD MALAMUD

THE sweet, the heady smell of Lieb's white bread drew customers in droves long before the loaves were baked. Alert behind the counter, Bessie, Lieb's second wife, discerned a stranger among them, a frail, gnarled man with a hard hat who hung, disjoined, at the edge of the crowd. Though the stranger looked harmless enough among the aggressive purchasers of baked goods, she was at once concerned. Her glance questioned him but he signaled with a deprecatory nod of his hatted head that he would wait—glad to (forever)—though his face glittered with misery. If suffering had marked him, he no longer sought to conceal the sign; the shining was his own—him—now. So he frightened Bessie.

She made quick hash of the customers, and when they, in response to her annihilating service, were gone, she returned to him her stare.

He tipped his hat. "Pardon me—Kobotsky. Is Lieb the baker here?"

"Who Kobotsky?"

"An old friend"—frightening her further.

"From where?"

"From long ago."

"What do you want to see him?"

The question insulted, so Kobotsky was reluctant to say.

As if drawn into the shop by the magic of a voice, the baker, shirtless, appeared from the rear. His pink, fleshy arms had been deep in dough. For a hat he wore jauntily a flour-covered, brown paper sack. His peering glasses were dusty with flour, and the inquisitive face white with it so that he resembled a paunchy ghost; but the ghost, through the glasses, was Kobotsky, not he.

"Kobotsky," the baker cried almost with a sob, for it was so many years gone Kobotsky reminded him of, when they were both at least young, and circumstances were altered—ah, different. Unable, for sentimental reasons, to refrain from smarting tears, he jabbed them away with a thrust of the hand.

Kobotsky removed his hat—he had grown all but bald where Lieb was gray—and patted his flushed forehead with an immaculate handkerchief.

Lieb sprang forward with a stool. "Sit, Kobotsky."

"Not here," Bessie murmured.

"Customers," she explained to Kobotsky. "Soon comes the supper rush."

"Better in the back," nodded Kobotsky.

So that was where they went, happier for the privacy. But it happened that no customers came so Bessie went in to hear.

Kobotsky sat enthroned in a private corner of the room, stoop-shouldered, his black coat and hat on, the stiff, gray-veined hands drooping over thin thighs. Lieb, peering through full moons, eased his bones on a flour sack. Bessie lent an attentive ear but the visitor was dumb. Embarrassed, Lieb did the talking: ah, of old times. The world was new. We were, Kobotsky, young. Do you remember how both together, immigrants out of steerage, we registered in night school?

"*Haben, hatte, gehabt.*" He cackled at the sound of it.

No word from the gaunt one on the tall stool. Bessie fluttered around an impatient duster. She shot a glance into the shop: empty.

BERNARD MALAMUD'S short stories, of which this is the fourth to appear in our pages, have aroused perhaps as much interest and admiration as any fiction we have published. Mr. Malamud was born in Brooklyn in 1914 and attended City College and Columbia University. His first novel, *The Natural*, is to be published next month.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lieb, acting the life of the party, recited, to cheer his friend: "'Come, said the wind to the trees one day, Come over the meadows with me and play.' Remember, Kobotsky?"

Bessie sniffed aloud. "Lieb, the bread!"

The baker bounced up, strode over to the gas oven and pulled one of the tiered doors down. Just in time he yanked out the trays of brown breads in hot pans, and set them on the tin-top worktable.

Bessie clucked at the narrow escape.

Lieb peered into the shop. "Customers," he said triumphantly. Flushed, she went in. Kobotsky, with wetted lips, watched her go. Lieb set to work molding the risen dough into two trays of pans. Soon the bread was baking, but Bessie was back.

The honey odor of the new loaves distracted Kobotsky. He deeply breathed the sweet fragrance, as if this were the first air he was tasting, and even beat his fist against his chest at the delicious smell.

"Oh, my God," he all but wept. "Wonderful."

"With tears," Lieb said humbly, pointing to the large pot of dough.

Kobotsky nodded.

For thirty years, the baker explained, he had been never with a penny to his name. One day, out of misery, he had wept into the dough and thereafter his bread was so sweet it brought customers in from everywhere.

"My cakes they don't like so much, but my bread and rolls they run miles to buy."

KOBOTSKY blew his nose, then peeked into the shop: three customers.

"Lieb"—a whisper.

Despite himself the baker stiffened.

The visitor's eyes swept back to Bessie out front, then, under raised brows, questioned the baker.

Lieb, however, remained mute.

Kobotsky coughed clear his throat. "Lieb, I need two hundred dollars." His voice broke.

Lieb slowly sank onto the sack. He knew—had known. From the minute of Kobotsky's appearance he had weighed in his thoughts this against the remembrance of the lost and bitter hundred, fifteen years ago. Kobotsky swore he had repaid it, Lieb said no. Afterwards a broken friendship. It took years to blot out of the system the memoried outrage.

Kobotsky bowed his head.

At least admit you were wrong, thought Lieb, waiting a cruelly long time.

Kobotsky stared at his crippled hands. Once a cutter of furs, driven by arthritis out of the business.

Lieb gazed too. He breathed with pain on the right side. The button of a truss bit into his belly. Both eyes were cloudy with cataracts. Though the doctor swore he would see after the operation, he feared otherwise. He sighed. The wrong was in the past. Forgiven: forgiven at the sight of him.

"For myself, positively, but she"—Lieb nodded shopwise—"is a second wife. Everything is in her name." He held up empty hands.

Kobotsky's eyes were shut.

"But I will ask her—" Lieb looked doubtful.

"My wife needs—"

The baker raised a palm. "Don't speak."

"Tell her—"

"Leave it to me."

He seized the broom and circled the room, raising clouds of white dust.

When Bessie, breathless, got back she threw one look at them, and with tightened lips, waited adamant.

Lieb hastily scoured the pots in the iron sink, stored the bread pans under the table and stacked the fragrant loaves. He put one eye to the slot of the oven: baking, all baking.

Facing Bessie, he broke into a sweat so hot it momentarily stunned him.

Kobotsky squirmed atop the stool.

"Bessie," said the baker at last, "this is my old friend."

She nodded gravely.

Kobotsky lifted his hat.

"His mother—God bless her—gave me many times a plate hot soup. Also when I came to this country, for years I ate at his table. His wife is a very fine person—Dora—you will someday meet her—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kobotsky softly groaned.

"So why I didn't meet her yet?" Bessie said, still, after a dozen years, jealous of the first wife's prerogatives.

"You will."

"Why didn't I?"

"Lieb—" pleaded Kobotsky.

"Because I didn't see her myself fifteen years," Lieb admitted.

"Why not?" she pounced.

Lieb paused. "A mistake."

Kobotsky turned away.

"My fault," said Lieb.

"Because you never go any place," Bessie spat out. "Because you live always in the shop. Because it means nothing to you to have friends."

Lieb solemnly agreed.

"Now she is sick," he announced. "The doctor must operate. This will cost two hundred dollars. I promised Kobotsky—"

Bessie screamed.

Kobotsky got off the stool, hat in hand.

Pressing a palm to her bosom, Bessie lifted her arm to her eyes. She tottered. They both ran forward to catch her but she did not fall. Kobotsky retreated quickly to the stool and Lieb returned to the sink.

Bessie, her face like the inside of a loaf, quietly addressed the visitor. "I have pity for your wife but we can't help you. I am sorry, Mr. Kobotsky, we are poor people, we don't have the money."

"A mistake," Lieb cried, enraged.

Bessie strode over to the shelf and tore out a bill box. She dumped its contents on the table, the papers flying everywhere.

"Bills," she shouted.

Kobotsky hunched his shoulders.

"Bessie, we have in the bank—"

"No—"

"I saw the bankbook."

"So what if you saw a few dollars, so have you got life insurance?"

He made no answer.

"Can you get?" she taunted.

The front door banged. It banged often. The shop was crowded with customers clamoring for bread. Bessie stomped out to wait on them.

In the rear the wounded stirred. Kobotsky, with bony fingers, buttoned his overcoat.

"Sit," sighed the baker.

"Lieb, I am sorry—"

"Sit."

Kobotsky sat, his face lit with sadness.

When Bessie finally got rid of the rush, Lieb stirred, went into the shop. He spoke to her quietly, almost in a whisper, and she answered as quietly, but it took only a minute to set them quarreling.

Kobotsky slipped off the stool. He went to the sink, wet half his handkerchief and held it to his dry eyes. Folding the handkerchief he put it away in his overcoat pocket then took out a small penknife and quickly pared his fingernails.

As he entered the shop, Lieb was pleading with Bessie, reciting the embittered hours of his toil, the enduring drudgery. And now that he had a cent to his name, what was there to live for if he could not share it with a dear friend? But Bessie had her back to him.

"Please," Kobotsky said, "don't fight. I go away now."

Lieb gazed at him in exasperation, Bessie stayed with head averted.

"Yes," Kobotsky sighed, "the money I wanted for Dora, but she is not sick, Lieb, she is dead."

"Ai," Lieb cried, wringing his hands.

Bessie faced the visitor, pallid.

"Not now," he spoke kindly, "five years ago."

Lieb groaned.

"The money I need for a stone on her grave. She never had a stone. This Sunday is five years that she is dead and every year I promise her, Dora, this year I will give you a stone, and every year I give her nothing."

The grave, to his everlasting shame, lay uncovered before all eyes. He had long ago paid a fifty-dollar deposit for a headstone with her name on it in clearly chiseled letters but had never got the rest of the money. If there wasn't one thing to do with it there was always another: the first year an operation, the second he couldn't work, imprisoned again by arthritis, the third a widowed sister

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lost her only son and the little Kobotsky earned had to help support her, the fourth incapacitated by boils that made him ashamed to walk out into the street, this year he was at least working, but only for just enough to eat and sleep, so Dora still lay without a stone, and for aught he knew he would someday return to the cemetery and find her grave gone.

Tears sprang into the baker's eyes. One gaze at Bessie's face—at the odd looseness of neck and body—told him that she too was moved. Ah, he had won out. She would now say yes, give the money, and they would then all sit down at the table and eat supper together.

But Bessie, though weeping, shook her head, and before they could guess what, had blurted out the story of her afflictions: how the Bolsheviki came, when she was a little girl, and dragged her darling father into the snowy fields without his shoes on; the shots scattered the blackbirds in the trees and the snow oozed blood; how, when she was married a year, her husband, a sweet and gentle man, an educated accountant—rare in those days and that place—died of typhus in an epidemic in Warsaw; and how she, abandoned in her grief, years later found sanctuary in the home of an older brother in Germany, who sacrificed his own chances to send her, before the war, to America, and as a result, in all probability ended up with his wife and daughter and her two blessed children in Hitler's incinerators.

"So I came to America and met here a baker, a poor man—who was always in his life poor—without a penny and without enjoyment in his life, and I married him, God knows why, and with my both hands, working day and night, I fixed up for him his piece of business and we make now, after twelve years, a little living. But Lieb is a sick man, with weak lungs, and eyes that he needs an operation, and this is not yet everything. Suppose, God forbid, that he died, what will I do alone by myself? Where will I go, where, and who will take care of me if I have nobody?"

The baker, who had often heard this tale, munched, as he listened, chunks of soft white bread.

When she had finished he tossed the shell of the loaf away. Kobotsky, at the end, had held his hands over his ears.

With copious tears streaming from her eyes, Bessie raised her head and suspiciously sniffed the air. Screeching suddenly, she ran into the rear and with a cry wrenched open the oven door. A cloud of smoke billowed out at her. The loaves in the trays were blackened bricks—charred corpses.

Kobotsky and the baker embraced and sighed over their lost youth. They pressed mouths together and parted forever.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

I GOT TWO, WHO GOT THREE?

When Movies Were Two for a Nickel

NATHAN HALPER & BENJAMIN MANDELKER

ONE paid two cents. The other had to pay three.

The whole thing became a contest. Each would swear he didn't have it. We would quibble; we would haggle. We would stand by our neighborhood movie's entrance, like a pair of rival barkers, hollering to all who passed, "I got two. Who got three? I got two. Who got three?"

Of course, any time we fell into some real money—a dime!—we preferred to walk up to 14th Street where there was a movie and a vaudeville show combined. Best of all we liked Tuesdays when they had Amateur Night, and we went hoping that the performers would be bad so we could yell, "Give 'em the hook!" And as the long wooden hook came out of the wings, caught the performer round the waist, and dragged him off the stage, we would whistle, stomp, and hiss in an ecstasy of glee.

But as a rule we lacked the price. So it was the neighborhood movie for us, where the price was two for five, hence the agonizing struggle: "I got two. Who got three?"

Since neither of us liked to miss any moment of the program, one or the other would have to give in and produce the crucial penny. Yet, until the last split second, each would keep on trying: each one looking stubbornly ready to go on forever—when most ready to surrender.

But I realized that even if I won I really lost, because it always meant sacrificing some of the show. Then inside the kids would have to tell me what had happened and was going to happen. So instead—I paid the penny. And then could tell other kids myself. I would haggle. I would quibble. But as soon as I could see that my partner was prepared for a test of endurance, I would show I was a sport. I would treat him. After which—I'd remind him. And remind him.

A better system was to make a combine. We would each contribute three cents. This put six cents in the kitty; a jit for the admissions and a penny left for candy.

Candy—we would study the showcase. All its colors: textures: shapes. Trays of jelly beans, gaily tinted like balloons. Trays of lemon, lime, and cherry drops, in those rich yet sober shades, like the jars of colored water in the drugstore window. There was licorice—black shoelaces. Chocolate pennies with white sprinkles. Green or red peppermint suckers—with diagonal stripes of white. Also kisses wrapped in silver. Hunks of jagged peanut brittle. Little nuts in red-brown membranes. Taffies. "Carmels." Un-

---

NEXT time you buy your $1.50 ticket to Radio City Music Hall, think of the dear dead days of our youth (some of us) when two seats for the latest Theda Bara romance cost five cents, and if you were lucky you could get away with paying the two-cent half of the deal. NATHAN HALPER and BENJAMIN MANDELKER offer here a composite memoir of the golden age of the movies. Mr. Halper, born in Manhattan in 1907, lives in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and is at present writing a book about James Joyce; he may be best remembered by our readers for "The Card Player: His Rise and Fall" (September 1947). Mr. Mandelker practices law in the field of labor relations and is national vice-president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; he was born in New York City in 1908.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

even squares of fudge; you could always see the mark of the long knife that had cut them. Candy corns; cocoanut bon-bons. Little sugar cushions with a stuffing made of jam. Crunchy sponges full of air holes. Foxy Grandpas. Nigger-babies (these days, they are called chocolate babies). Tiny yellow-pink bananas. Rows of shoe buttons in alignment on a ticker-tape of paper, the kind of paper they print the *Nation* or the *New Republic* on.

The reddish eyes of the old guy behind the counter would shift as ours shifted. We would scratch our chin. Till—having taken counsel—we would give him the decision. "Half o' dese, a quarter o' dose. . . . An' a quarter o' . . . dem!"

Sometimes we laid the extra penny on the car tracks on Delancey Street—so that, being flattened, it might do service as a nickel in the candy boxes on the backs of the alternate seats.

The nickel candy didn't taste as good. But—on the other hand—it was worth a *nickel.*

There was one more fine point. If the first thing that I said was, "Hey! Let's make a combine!" the other kid might think I was weak. Or that I was being tricky. It was wise to take it easy. I would bargain; I would bluster. I would show him I was selfish; I was stubborn; I was spiteful. He would feel the proper respect for my strength of character!

Then—only then—did I say, "Let's make a combine."

THEY were tiny places, with little air, stuffy, sweaty. Even we—who, like the sparrows, used to chirp amidst the offal—wrinkled our disdainful nostrils. We always called them "dumps."

The owners also knew it. Any time he found a moment, a man went down the aisle squirting out of some sort of Flit gun a cheap perfume that smelled even worse than the original smell.

Yet in spite of our scorn we stayed just as long as we could manage. Nowadays, when it is hard to sit through a picture even once, it is not easy to recall that we liked to see them two or even three times. This naturally brought us into conflict with the owners, who desired a rather more rapid turnover. At the end of the main feature there would be an intermission during which they would attempt to put out the repeaters. This required some discretion. The performance was continuous, and a patron might have come in just before the intermission; they had to devise a method for dividing sheep from goats.

The solution was the late-check.

The ticket-chopper in the movies still tears a stub off as you enter. Though your seats are not reserved, he sticks this check into your fist. You shove it in your pocket and forget all about it till you find it two weeks later, when you throw it in the wastebasket. Since the chopper could have put it there to start with, the process seems quite futile. Yet the stub used to have its function. At the intermission, they would put the straggly lights on, and the man—the same man who shot the Flit gun; probably the owner's cousin—would come prowling to collect it. If you did not have this late-check, he would thumb you to the exit.

The trouble was you never really knew the exact time of intermission since all kinds of extraneous factors could affect the length of the movie. You could never guess how long it would take to change reels. Or the film would break or burn, and they had to fix it. So you stood there by the exit, asking all who left the movie if late-checks had been collected. Once they had been, you entered, and saw Performance One. The next intermission, you still had your late-check, so you could see Performance Two.

When it came to Performance Three, that was when you had to hide. There was just a single aisle; seats ran from it to the wall. If you sat in the last seat, you were not disturbed by people tripping on your books and skates; you could sprawl; you could lean head and shoulders against the wall. And you were farthest from the bouncer. In the dim, faded light, you could get under the seat and squeeze down to the floor, and nine times out of ten he would pass you by. If you did not have a wall seat, you would hide out in the toilet. (It was the same later on, in the army: when the top kick came around to hand out details, the wise soldier tried to be in the latrine.)

WE USUALLY went on Fridays. Monday to Thursday, once out of school we would stamp into the house,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

smear a slab of bread with chicken fat, and then—unless it was a day for a fiddle or piano lesson—run out on the street to get a half-hour's play before going off to Hebrew school. On Friday, Hebrew school was closed, so we had time to look at movies.

Sometimes we tried sneaking in. Though this didn't make much sense. If you are going to take a chance, why not do it on 14th Street? Why not in the ten-cent movie? It is big: has a balcony: you can sit there eating peanuts and dropping the shells into the orchestra. Yet strange places made us shy. The two-for-fives were home. We knew the lay of the land. Back alley: side door: the unlocked window into the men's room. Any time he caught us, our old friend the factotum—holding on to an ear: we could not even squirm—would parade us to the exit, where a swift boot in the pants put us back on the street. There was little profit to it. But we sometimes felt the need of showing we were not scared!

A penny here, a penny there. I would run down to the corner for a cigar for Uncle Sol. Another penny. So usually I had the price of a ticket to the movies. But before I touched it, I would always try to get the three pennies from my Ma. And by an odd coincidence, the best time to get this money happened to be Friday.

I would hang around the house. As a rule, I stayed away when the women got busy; they would always find a chore. But on Friday they had so much to do, it was fairly safe to loiter.

They bought the carp and the chicken undressed. A bushel-basket near the door held the innards, feathers, scales. The kitchen smelled of singeing. Also onions, pepper, salt, and the raw fish being chopped. They had already washed the floor; it was covered with Jewish newspapers. A sweet wine was being poured from the dusty gallon jug into a cut-glass bottle. Sister would grate the horse-radish. Aunt was ironing the good tablecloth. Grandma was scrounging last week's wax out of our tallest candlesticks with a big black hairpin. Ma was kneading yellow dough on the flour-dusted bread board, shaping it, braiding it into a plump-muscled *challah*.

Go! Get out! You're underfoot! Here is money—for the movies! Spongecake is in the oven. Go! Go! Before you make it fall!

So we'd hurry off—to get a maximum number of minutes before the sacred evening came and the magic silver screen became profane.

Sometimes we could just go up brazenly and buy the tickets ourselves. Other times, when the cops were getting strict, the owners refused to sell admission to anyone under sixteen. So we stood there, begging—"Mister . . . take me in?" "Lady, *please* take me in?"—till we got some adult to lead us past the ticket-chopper—a pied piper followed by twenty-thirty brats, twenty-thirty tickets dangling like a string of sausages.

It was a wise thing to bring one's own personal taker-inner.

On a Sunday afternoon—Sunday was a time for play; but sometimes there was an argument; you refused to play with the kids or they would not play with *you*—on a Sunday afternoon, that was when you got your Grandma. She would never go on Friday. But she felt a little bored any time there was no work. So, unknotting her handkerchief, Grandma would count out her pennies. Then—both the selfsame size—you would march off to the movies.

Though she had been fifteen years in America, I not only read her the subtitles; I was forced to translate them. Even so, she did not get the plot or who was which one's husband. I had to try to make things clear. And the kids around us, seeing that it was a Grandma, joined in, correcting me and interrupting one another; there was a regular forum on each doubtful point, stopping only when it was time to explain a new one.

But on a Saturday in summer, there was little time for waiting. Sunlight seemed to last forever, leaving only the tiniest nub of evening. The moment Poppa's prayer crossed the line into the weekday, we would hurry, so as not to miss the picture. That was when an older sister used to double as a grownup.

Nowadays it wouldn't work. Women wear the same kind of clothing from the time they are twelve till, God willing, a hundred and twenty years. But in those days you could tell a woman from a girl by her clothes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So sister would put her hair up, get into Aunt's high heels, and, festooned in Grandma's fur-piece, the one with eyes and little fox claws, she would attempt to play the lady. Below the waist, she walked as fast as a person possibly could. But above it, she was stiff-backed, she was dignified and gracious. And I did some acting too. My feet were also in a hurry, yet I wore the somber face I associated with being good. I would show her great respect. I did not screech, did not fight. It was hot, but I didn't suck even a single piece of ice. I behaved a whole lot better than I ever did with Ma.

Sister spoke to the cashier in her most cultured voice. She didn't really look sixteen. But she never failed to fool a cashier willing to be fooled.

If we usually played on Sundays, it doesn't mean we preferred one-a-cat to seeing pictures. It's just that we were gambling that maybe in the evening we'd be able to maneuver some grownup into taking us. If a parent wouldn't take you, you would turn to other prospects: an uncle, or a fellow who was calling on an aunt. You would bring a glass of water, you would talk about the picture. Sometimes desire was so strong you couldn't speak, and then, your eyes hanging on the prospect's face, you would try telepathy. . . .

PA AND his friend Margolis used to walk up to 14th Street. Pa would sleep through the moving picture. Then, as soon as it was over, Margolis used to wake him and go to sleep himself.

Once in every while, Pa would take the family, herding us carefully into a long row in the highest balcony.

He was puzzled when the man with a bow tie and straw hat made his rapid jokes to the lady with blonde hair. But jugglers and acrobats brought him to a gentle simmer. Ma sat with pursed lips, gazing upon her brood as if to command us never to try these tricks ourselves. The jokes bothered her even more than they did Pa. She didn't understand them either, but she felt that if she did, they would turn out to be off-color.

Pa stayed awake at the movies only if it was Charlie Chaplin or—sometimes—Douglas Fairbanks. Ma thought Charlie Chaplin coarse, but she did like Douglas Fairbanks; she said his smile was nice. Ma had some other pets, too. She would speak about their smiles. Or—her own eyes glowing—their passionate eyes.

We liked any actor. We liked some more than others, but we liked them all.

William S. Hart was William S. Hart. But Ben Turpin was Ben Turpentine. Mary Pickford was Mary Pig's Feet, Mary Pitchfork, Mary Pickle-Puss. There was Rudolph Vaselino. There was also Tittie Barrels—Theda Bara.

Every picture was a window into realms beyond our own. If we liked a country, we would borrow its local customs: twirling clotheslines, shooting cap pistols from the hip, fencing up and down the stairs; leaping gracefully from the stoop with widespread legs and arms: landing on our toes: and resuming the fencing.

Ma was always saying we would be corner-boys. In Hebrew school and in regular school they were always finding fault with us. Our streets were full of insult. Anywhere we turned our hearts, there were new and old reproaches. There were also self-reproaches.

So it was a relief to see a movie about a crook. Nice to learn that a Lone Wolf or a Boston Blackie was a good guy underneath.

Any movie brought additions to our growing store of knowledge. We got to know about Maxim silencers. We learned of Yellow Tickets.

A husband often left a wife. But, in time, he'd return, asking her to forgive him. With that martyr-face which our mothers and teachers also had at their disposal, she would look off to one side, saying, "Forgive—but never forget!"

If a woman left her husband, that was only the first step. You would see her drinking wine. Then you saw her smoking. As she sank lower and lower, the cigarette-holder got longer. Finally, she would jump out of a third-story window.

"Love" was a joke, vamps were objects of derision. A sure way to get a laugh was to ape the hips and arms, eyes and mouth—all in motion—when one tried to lure a hero. Yet our jeers concealed a half-worried fascination. Some day, we knew, this mushy

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stuff would get us too. Meanwhile, we had secret crushes. Alice Joyce, Blanche Sweet, Constance Talmadge, Dorothy Dalton—all the way to Zasu Pitts.

News got introduced by a silent Pathé rooster. Woodrow Wilson had big teeth. Teddy Rooz-velt even bigger. There were reels from Zion: people doing arts and crafts, picking fruit, keeping bees.

There were early tries at color, and two different kinds of talkies—voices on a scratchy record, or our pal the bouncer reading the male and female voices through a hoarse megaphone.

WE WERE more than watchers. We were part of every scene. We were dancers reflecting every movement with movements of our own.

We would hiss the villain. In a helmet (like the Kaiser), or a sash and a sombrero, he always purred at the heroine. After which, he'd lock the door. We would cringe as he came near. Then along came Dusty Farnum! We bounced up and down on the horse. With the tension of our own bodies, we would get him to the house, rush him up the stairs. With our muscles, we would help him break the door. In righteous anger, we gathered in his fist.

Many read the titles. Others used to read the lips. The repeaters told the story—often breaking their recital with a laugh in anticipation of a prat-fall coming later.

All who weren't talking would hiss, "Ssh!"

Now a picture was not centered. Now a scene was upside down. Someone crossed the dusty beam that came out of the machine. "Down in front! DOWN in front!"

Someone stood up—blocking you. *"Your father a glazier?"*

The stuffy room got silent. The piano made the only sound. But you knew one should not cry. So you blinked: poked your knuckles into the bones around the eye socket: tried to think about something else. . . . Till it was safe to look again, till you had to blink again, poke again, walking the delicious tightrope, shaving the ambivalent edge of the almost-but-not-quite! All through *Humoresque*. All through *Over the Hill to the Poorhouse*. And, in *Broken Blossoms*, no use to blink—the tears came like a summer shower. Ah!

Or we laughed in a wonderland of skidding autos, Keystone cops, dynamite, Limburger cheese, pies, runaway lions. We rocked on the unpadded seats. Heads flapped on shaking shoulders. Only our eyes were steady, fixed on the screen!

There were also the serials. *Iron Man, Hidden Hand, Crimson Stain, The Voice on the Wire*—the villain's disguise gave the serial its name. Week after week we tried to identify him, every week noticing something to make us change our mind, arguing back and forth. Before we were halfway through, we had considered every member of the cast as a candidate. And in the final episode, when the old rascal got unmasked, we would find that—sure enough—it was someone we had suspected.

The heroine was in a car that hurtled into an abyss, and here the episode would end. We had to wait a week before we saw what happened next! Seven days of wondering and discussion. Each of us fought many battles. With mind sharpened by the study of the Talmud and tongue sharpened by a life of arguments, each defended his own solution and attacked the theories of others. Then at last we would see the new chapter. The heroine was in a car. It hurtled into an abyss. But they would insert a shot they had omitted last time: a second before the critical moment, she had stepped out of a door.

At the end of this new chapter, we would see the hero fall into a vat of vitriol. And we would sit on the curb, trying to guess how he might escape, knowing all the time that we would be cheated. One week later, we would learn that instead of the hero falling, it was only the hero's overcoat! But it did not, did not matter.

We knew we would be cheated. But we lived on shifting planes. One plane on which we knew the score. One—on which we felt. And, third, the plane of our sidewalk discussions: an abstract world, a Platonic world, where an ideal heroine fell into an ideal chasm, the essence of a hero into the essence of a vat!

Though we did not know it, we were a bunch of little high-brows, seeing shows that are now given at the Museum of Modern Art.

Oh, we liked them all!

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CEDARS OF LEBANON

FROM "THE MANTLE OF ELIJAH"

A Karaite Presentation of Fundamental Jewish Law

ELIJAH BASYATCHI

It was estimated that in 1942 about one hundred Karaite families were living in the United States—a remnant of a once flourishing Jewish "heresy." The movement itself will soon disappear entirely, if it has not done so already. But it will have left behind it a history and a body of writing of unusual interest.

The origins of Karaism are still relatively obscure. It rose in the 8th century C.E. in the Near East and flourished in the two following centuries; thereafter its vitality ebbed, but slowly, and there was significant Karaite activity down through our own time. It is possible that Karaism had its roots in older heterodox movements (the Sadducees, the Essenes, etc.); it was certainly much affected by the rise of Islam and by the emergence of Moslem theology and scholasticism. The Karaites rejected the rabbinic (Rabbanite) tradition as codified in the Talmud and aimed to "reform" Judaism by returning afresh to Scripture; in this, their attitude paralleled that of the later Christian Reformation. They also laid greater stress on ascetic practices, and were more inclined to a Messianic nationalism than rabbinic Jews.

Despite their revolt against the Oral Law and their adherence only to the Written Law, the Karaites soon developed a tradition of their own which was no less stringent and complete than the rabbinic one. Some later Karaite thinkers, while still condemning Rabbanism, nevertheless relied freely on the work of its authors, particularly Maimonides. One such was Elijah Basyatchi, born in Adrianople about 1420, and author of a code of Karaite law entitled *The Mantle of Elijah* (in Hebrew, *Adderet Eliyahu*).

The following excerpt from *The Mantle of Elijah* is condensed from the section printed in the recent *Karaite Anthology*, translated and edited by Leon Nemoy, and published by Yale University Press under the Louis M. Rabinowitz Foundation grant as Volume VIII of the invaluable Yale Judaica Series.—Ed.

"THE law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul" (Ps. 19:8) to the sublime place from which it had been hewn, so that it might enter the palace of divine wisdom and so that knowledge of God might be upon the earth and God's glory fill the world. This takes place in three ways: through ethical qualities, practical ordinances, and rational ordinances.

2. Ethical qualities may be learned from the stories of the Patriarchs who are mentioned in the Law, as well as from the tales of the Prophets, the kings, and the wars recounted in the books of prophecy, since all these accounts induce a man to arrange his personal affairs according to the politic order.

3. This is the reason why the Giver of the Law placed at its beginning the tales of the Patriarchs, and it is to this perfection that King David referred when he said: *the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple* (Ps. 19:8); for by means of these tales any simple person may learn, so far as it is possible for his natural ability, to acquire the perfection of ethical qualities, in order that he may do the proper thing at the proper time for the proper reason and in the proper place.

4. These tales are called *the testimony of the Lord* because the prophetic tales mentioned by the Prophets, and especially the patriarchal tales mentioned by Moses, were all or most of them given by the Lord to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Prophets with His testimony as to their truth, and they recorded them in the books of prophecy.

5. The reason that the Law does not prescribe for us the observance of ethical qualities in the same admonitory manner as it does the practical and rational ordinances is that had the Law prescribed these for us in the same fashion as the other ordinances, we would have found ourselves everlastingly in sin, since ethical qualities are characteristics of the soul which . . . is joined to matter —i.e., to the human body—which is constantly subject to change. For this reason we would have been everlastingly in a state of sin, and there would have been no man on earth righteous enough to do only good and never to sin.

6. Moreover, this would also have caused men to make light of other fundamental ordinances, because as a man would observe that he is unable to fulfill perfectly most of the ethical ordinances imposed upon him, he would inevitably grow careless about all ordinances, including the fundamental commandments. This would be as if a master were to give many orders to his servant and tell him that if he did not fulfill all of them perfectly he would be flogged unmercifully; now this servant, observing that he could not possibly perform them all and knowing that his master would therefore assuredly flog him, of necessity would lose all hope and would not carry out even one of his master's orders.

7. That is why the Prophet has said: *Even thus shall the children of Israel eat their bread unclean among the nations* (Ezek. 4:13), and that is why scholars have said that the ordinances of the Law were imposed upon men according to their ability to understand and perform them and that when we do not know an ordinance perfectly we must fulfill it approximately. It was therefore a wise procedure on the part of our divine Law to set forth the politic wisdom in the form of tales, and not in the form of commands.

8. Moreover, the opinions of men are more likely to be fortified in fulfilling this politic ordinance by the method of tales, for they observe that so-and-so among the Patriarchs had acted thus-and-so with such-and-such results and are guided by this in their own actions. In fact, for this very reason even some practical ordinances have been set forth by way of tales and stories mentioned in Scripture.

9. The practical ordinances are ordinances like: *And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath* (Exod. 21:16); *And thou shalt sacrifice the Passover to the Lord, thy God* (Deut. 16:2); *Ye shall surely destroy all the places* (Deut. 12:2); *In booths shall ye dwell seven days* (Lev. 23:42)—in general, all ordinances making some action obligatory. These practical ordinances are the road and the entrance to the reception of the rational ordinances, and scholars have said that the practical ordinances are the preparation for, and the introduction to, the rational ordinances. They said also that the excellence of the ordinances imposed by the human intellect requires their being obligatory, while the obligatory nature of the ordinances imposed by the Law requires their being excellent. They said further that each practical ordinance has a reason and a cause appropriate to its own character, and the fact that we are unable to learn the reasons for some ordinances is solely because of the insufficiency of our knowledge. In the case of some ordinances, however, the Law itself explains the reason for them, e.g., the ordinance of the Sabbath is explained by *For in six days did the Lord make the heavens and the earth* (Exod. 20:11); this tells us also of the incipience of the world and the eternal existence of the Lord. Likewise, the ordinance commanding the eating of unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and the flesh of the Passover lamb is explained by their being a memorial of the exodus from Egypt, which also tells us of the existence of the Lord and His care of what exists underneath the heavens. . . . By means of the practical ordinances man enlightens the eyes of his heart and purifies his soul of all shortcomings, so that it becomes as spotless as a polished mirror in which to behold the Lord in the land of life.

10. The rational ordinances are the fundamental ordinances established and planted in man's heart, as King David expresses it: *The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart* (Ps. 19:9); i.e., they are planted and rooted in the heart, which is the fountainhead of wisdom, as it is written: *In the heart of him who has discernment rests wisdom* (Prov. 14:33), and again: *The spirit*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts (Prov. 20:27).

11. These ordinances are known to man as a result of mental consideration, which is the reason why they were known prior to the revelation of the Law, from the time of the Patriarch Abraham onward, as it is written of him: *and he kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws* (Gen. 26:5). This is true also of the Ten Commandments, excepting the one ordaining the Sabbath. However, the truth is that the mystery of the Sabbath also is a matter of reason.

12. You must know also that if the believer in the divine Law takes these rational ordinances to heart by way of example from the deeds of the Biblical personages, they are bound to be established and planted in his heart more firmly than if he had received them only by way of tradition. However, the proper thing for every believer in the Law is to receive these ordinances first by tradition, and only afterward, with the help of his divine Rock, to seek the knowledge of the cause for every ordinance, according to its interpretations, particulars, and Biblical examples. . . . If he were to endeavor first to learn the reasons and the Biblical examples for every commandment, and accept it by tradition only afterward, he would be like a man who refuses to eat bread until he learns how it was sown, how it was harvested, how it was ground, and how it was baked, and who would consequently go hungry a long time.

13. The root and basis of these rational commandments is the existence and oneness of the Lord, and the denial of His corporeality, which is the reason why the Ten Commandments begin with *I am the Lord, thy God* (Exod. 20:2); for the relation of this commandment . . . which affirms the existence of God to the others is like that of the substance to the accidences which it carries.

14. THE ordinances are also divided into two other groups, the positive and the negative. Examples of positive ordinances are: *And thou shalt sacrifice the Passover unto the Lord, thy God* (Deut. 16:2); *And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks* (Deut. 16:10); *And thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart* (Deut. 6:5); *that they shall make for themselves fringes* (Num. 15:38); *and thou shalt make a parapet for thy roof* (Deut. 22:8). And it is to these positive ordinances that King David alluded in saying: *the ordinances of the Lord are true, they are righteous altogether* (Ps. 19:10). The Rabbanites have made a reckoning of these positive ordinances and they say that there are two hundred and forty-eight in all.

15. Examples of negative ordinances are: *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* (Exod. 20:3); *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain* (Exod. 20:7); *Thou shalt eat no leaven with it* (Deut. 16:3); *Thou shalt not carry tales among thy people* (Lev. 19:16). The Rabbanites have made a reckoning of these also and have found them to be three hundred and sixty-five, and it is to them that King David alluded when he said: *The fear of God is clean, enduring forever* (Ps. 19:10), for the word *fear* cannot refer to anything except negative ordinances.

16. The positive ordinances are the path and the point of contact for the negative ones, which are the fundamental ones; for we find positive ordinances the essence of which is negative. For example, *And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath* (Exod. 31:16) implies the obligation to rest, and resting is not action but lack of action. So also: *ye shall afflict your souls* (Lev. 16:29) implies "ye shall not give yourselves the pleasure of eating and drinking"; and *sanctify yourselves* (Lev. 11:44) implies "ye shall not defile yourselves." . . .

18. The negative ordinances are more stringent, as commands of the Lord, than the positive ones, because he who does what he had been commanded not to do, yet does it notwithstanding, causes greater wrath on the part of the Lord than he who is too lazy to do what he had been ordered to do. The latter, in not performing what he had been commanded to do, may have been prevented by some restraining cause, whether a matter of time or place. On the other hand, he who does that which he had been ordered not to do, yet does it nevertheless, is deliberately rebelling against the intent of Him who had issued that ordinance. That is why the extreme punishment of being cut off [i.e., excommunicated] is, under the Law, imposed mostly for violation of negative ordinances and only in a few instances for violation of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

positive ordinances, like those of circumcision and Passover, the violator of which draws the punishment of being cut off only because these two ordinances are among the original fundamental ordinances of the Jewish faith.

19. However, we find one ordinance which embraces all the positive ordinances together and involves the punishment of being cut off, namely, *Cursed be he that confirms not the words of this law* (Deut. 27:26). *Cursed be he* implies the divine punishment of being cut off by way of death, since the crimes referred to are committed in secret, and in fact the several occurrences of *Cursed be he* in this section of Deuteronomy refer to secret crimes, inasmuch as transgressors who lie with an animal or a mother-in-law or a sister, or accept a bribe, act in secret. In the case of crimes openly committed, human law exacts its due from the perpetrators, but where they act in secret their punishment consists in their being cut off by the hand of God.

20. You must know also that all ordinances fall into three other categories; first, those fulfilled by way of the belief of one's heart, i.e., the commands of the Lord which are planted in the human heart; second, those fulfilled by word of mouth; and third, those fulfilled by action, as it is written: *For this word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, to do it* (Deut. 30:14). All, however, are also meant for the heart, since the heart is the principal thing, as it is written: *for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts* (I Chron. 28:9); *thou didst well that it was in thy heart* (I Kings 8:18); *but the Lord looks into the heart* (1 Sam. 16:7). . . .

25. You must know also that there are many ordinances which are not expressly mentioned in the Law but which issue from the validity of other ordinances or from the accounts of prophetic utterances, and their excellence requires their being obligatory. These ordinances are derived by means of analogy, in several ways, as is evident from the words of scholars.

26. The first variety: when an ordinance is found in the Law in one place and its precise meaning is explained in another place, either in the Law or in the prophetic books, we assume that the explanation of the ordinance as first formulated is the same as that found in the other place. For example, with regard to the verse *If brethren should dwell together, and one of them should die* (Deut 25:5), one might be in doubt as to whether *brethren* signifies brothers by blood or brothers by common family. Now from the story of Ruth the Moabite, we learn that redemption of the deceased brother's wife and property belonged in Ruth's case to a brother by family. Since the Law forbids the application of this ordinance to brothers by blood, we therefore interpret *If brethren should dwell together* to refer only to brothers by family. Likewise we assume that the verse *Thou shalt not take a wife in addition to her sister, to make enmity* (Lev. 18:18), refers to sisters by religion, and not by blood, in accordance with what scholars have explained in this matter.

27. The second variety: from the rule governing the particular we learn the rule governing the general. For example, the verse *Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together* (Deut. 22:10) forbids the combination of two specific kinds of animals, one of which is clean and the other unclean; it also mentions plowing, which is a particular kind of work used here in lieu of all kinds of work. We conclude therefore that . . . unclean and clean animals of any species whatever may not be used jointly in the same work, of whatever type it may be.

28. The third variety is called comparative analogy or, as the scholars term it, "equal nature." For example, it is written: *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother* (Lev. 18:14), from which we learn by way of comparative analogy that the same prohibition applies also to the mother's brother.

29. The fourth variety is analogy leading from the minor to the major, for the Law sometimes forbids a minor thing without prohibiting the corresponding major, the illegality of which is therefore derived by way of this variety of analogy. For example, it is written: *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy son's daughter, or thy daughter's daughter* (Lev. 18:10), but Scripture does not expressly forbid marrying the daughter herself. That the latter, too, is forbidden we learn by arguing from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

minor to the major, i.e., if the daughter's daughter is forbidden, how much more so the daughter herself. . . .

31. The sixth variety is logical preference, as for example, the prohibition of marrying the step-brothers of the father, which Rabbi Jeshuah ben Judah forbade by way of logical preference, i.e., preference demanded by both reason and common knowledge. This applies to cases for which we find no pertinent ordinance written in the Law, nor one that might be derived by analogy from another written ordinance; in such cases reason supplies the pertinent ordinance, whether permissive or prohibitive. Most of the laws governing inheritance are derived by way of logical preference, as will be explained in the proper place.

32. The seventh variety is analogy based upon similarity, i.e., what is prohibited to one of two of a kind, is forbidden to the other also, as required by both reason and common knowledge. For example, if marrying the daughter of the father's wife is forbidden because two closely related persons may not be married to two other closely related persons, then likewise wherever the marriage of two close relatives to two other close relatives is involved, the same prohibition should apply.

33. THESE are the varieties of analogy used by scholars in investigating the laws of the ordinances. There are, however, other ordinances in the observance of which we have been raised since the days of our fathers, and their fathers before them, and which are a matter of custom with us. They are not recorded in the Law and have become as second nature with us; nevertheless, they flow in a sense from the intent of prophetic utterances. Such ordinances are called by scholars "the burden of inheritance" or "tradition"; for example, the slaughtering of animals which must be performed by means of a slaughtering knife and by proper cutting of the prescribed parts of the body; the sanctification of the new month which must be determined by the appearances of the New Moon, even though this latter may be derived also by analogy.

34. The learned Rabbi Tobiah states that he who says that there are traditions which have no support in Scripture does so merely because of his insufficient comprehension of the particular ordinance. That is why scholars have said that all ordinances are valid, whether written in Scripture or derived by way of analogy or transmitted by tradition; and they have said also, "The observance of Scripture rests on three things: the written text, analogy, the 'burden of inheritance.'"

35. Karaite tradition, however, is not like the tradition believed in by the Rabbanites, since the latter add to and subtract from Scripture and say that tradition overcomes the written Biblical text, notwithstanding that Scripture says expressly: *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you* (Deut. 4:2). If their intention be merely to interpret the prophetic utterances, it is not seemly for them to say that tradition overcomes the written Biblical text. For example, with regard to the ordinance *Forty stripes may he give him* (Deut. 25:3), they say that the meaning is forty less one. They say likewise that the husband should inherit his wife's property, referring to the verse *And he shall inherit her* (Num. 27:11); a few among them say that this is a matter of mere assumption. Yet it is evident from Scripture that this verse deals only with hereditary landed property, since it is written: *If a man should die, having left no son, ye shall transfer his landed property to his daughter. And if he have no daughter, ye shall give his landed property to his brothers. And if he have no brothers, ye shall give his landed property to the brothers of his father. And if his father have no brothers, ye shall give his landed property to his nearest kinsman, from among his family, and he shall inherit her* (Num. 27:8-11); they thus clearly added to Scripture an ordinance of their own when they said that the husband should inherit his wife's estate. Karaite tradition, on the other hand, is such as is acknowledged by all Israel, and it does not stand up against that which is recorded in the Writ of divine truth; and our scholars have said that every tradition which does not stand up against Scripture, does not add to what is stated in Scripture, is acknowledged by all Israel, and has indirect support in Scripture, is to be called genuine tradition, and we must accept it. They said further that most of the Mishnah and the Talmud comprises genuine utterances of our forefathers, and Rabbi Nissi ben Noah has said that our people are obligated to study the Mishnah and the Talmud.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ON THE HORIZON

SELLING PARIS ON WESTERN CULTURE

Report on an American-Sponsored Exposition

HERBERT LUETHY

THIS May, Paris was the scene of an international festival held under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. It was a festival of "Masterpieces of the 20th Century," and it proved to be one of the most dazzling expositions of modern art ever brought before the public, which was, in this case, asked to judge for itself whether the contemporary free culture of the West was alive or decadent.

Obviously, the organizers wanted the whole performance to be completely convincing; they took care to offer quantity as well as quality, they were as much concerned for abundance as for taste. It should suffice to name the most famous participants: the great French orchestras, the Boston Symphony, the Philharmonic of Vienna, the RIAS orchestra of Berlin, the orchestra and choral group of the Italian Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, the orchestra of French Switzerland—all these directed by celebrated conductors and by some of the composers themselves; then the New York City Ballet, the Covent Garden Opera, the Wiener Staatsoper, the American National Theatre and Academy. Outstanding works by more than sixty composers were performed, many of them for the first time in Paris. There were also literary discussions in which, among others, William Faulkner, W. H. Auden, André Malraux, Ignazio Silone, Allen Tate, and Stephen Spender took part.

All this was during the month of May, when Paris would be literally bursting with artistic activity and displays in any case. The New York City Ballet gave a last fillip to the regular ballet season; some fifty theaters of all sorts were mustering their forces to offer their final programs just before the season's end; and the festival's exhibition of "Art Masterpieces of the 20th Century," organized by James Johnson Sweeney, had to compete with three or four exhibitions, comparable to it in scope and quality, that opened at the same time: "Fifty Years of French Painting from Cézanne to Matisse," "Still Life Through the Ages," "Italian Art in the Middle Ages," "Two Thousand Years of Mexican Art"—not to mention the permanent exhibitions, the dozens of active galleries, and the interminable literary and artistic discussions carried on in the reviews and coteries.

A FEW weeks ago, under the auspices of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the city of Paris was treated to a large and, from all reports, extremely impressive festival of Western culture. Aside from the purely cultural aspects of this festival, however, there was clearly an impulse arising out of current international politics: to demonstrate the superiority of Western culture to that of the Communist world threatening it, and to affirm its continuing vitality against Communist charges of decadence and degeneration. HERBERT LUETHY here discusses whether such a purpose can be accomplished by such means, and offers an interesting report on the Parisian reception of the festival. Mr. Luethy has been a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, his most recent article being "Behind Reawakened German Nationalism" in the February 1952 issue. He was born in Basel in 1918 and attended the universities of Paris, Geneva, and Zurich. The present article has been translated from the French by Lionel Abel.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the end, everybody—organizers, performers, speakers, critics, and spectators—was simply worn out, and a good deal of the irritated feeling that gathered over the festival at moments can be explained by fatigue. Cities in the provinces lend themselves to such events with more grace than does Paris, where the feast is permanent.

THE idea around which the whole affair was organized was an admirable one. The pundits of Stalinism have declared that Western civilization is corrupt, rotten, doomed, culturally bankrupt, unable to do more in art than continue to promote either cheap commercialism or parasitic snobbism. These accusations have been echoed in the West by the tired, the dispirited, and the ignorant. We will take up the challenge, said Nicolas Nabokov, the organizer of the festival; we shall appear at the trial of Western civilization and show, with concrete evidence, that our civilization is alive and, indeed, more vigorous and creative than ever. We shall mobilize in the face of the totalitarian empires—which have reduced art and thought to slavery and can now produce little more than massive postcards, busts of generals, and military marches—all the artistic and intellectual riches produced by the societies of the West through free research and spontaneous creation: the Masterpieces of the 20th Century! Let them come and see for themselves and, if they dare, measure their works against ours!

It was a noble and generous idea, and it was good to see so many contemporary works of value collected together in a single city for the space of a whole month. It would have been even better, perhaps, if there had been no advance ideological proclamations: effective propaganda does not label itself. Moreover, can the creations of a culture really be mobilized around a flag like soldiers, even if it is the flag of freedom? The spirit bloweth where it listeth, and seldom does a great art work make an ideological warrior. Does a painting necessarily speak for the conditions under which it was produced? Do the Sistine frescoes argue in favor of the conditions under which Michelangelo worked? Or the symphonies of Beethoven for the society of his time or country? Or, closer to us, does the work of Béla Bartók—whose sad fate Mr. Nabokov rightly chose to recall in the handsome issue of the monthly magazine *Preuves* that was devoted to the "Masterpieces of the 20th Century"—does it really speak for the society that let him die of poverty in a hospital ward in New York, after having condemned him to spend the creative energy of his last years seeking out a miserable living through private lessons and "lecture tours"? A very large, and most alive, part of contemporary work expresses revolt—whether justifiedly or unreasonably is beside the point—against the conditions under which it was created.

Our society has not, it is true, suppressed all such revolt, and dissident non-commercial works have been able to appear in obscurity and survive in drawers until their hour of tragically posthumous glory. The spirit, if unable to blow where it lists, has at least been allowed to leave a sign of its passage—it is in this sense, and only in this strictly limited sense, that the masterpieces of the 20th century can be said to testify for their time and place.

There are committed, *engagé* artists who are enlisted in all sorts of causes good and bad, as are other citizens; but there is no committed art, for commitment would make it cease to be art at all. This is why there is something disturbing in any ideological mobilization of culture. It is justified only to the degree that the end in view is clearly understood to be the defense of the vital minimum of freedom which even the worst of past despotisms allowed to the creative spirit, and which is today nonexistent in the totalitarian states. The vital minimum of creative spirit that remains to the free societies is precisely the freedom to die of hunger; the right of the man sure of his pioneering and heretical vocation as an artist to persist in giving form to his vision, regardless of general indifference, concerned with posterity or with nobody, in poverty and scorn, despite and against everyone. Two of the most moving evenings of the festival, the Bartók concert and the Paris première of Alban Berg's grim and brilliant *Wozzeck*—which opened the festival and was its crowning achievement—brought home the fact that both artists died before their works had acquired commercial value—if in fact their works have that even now.

The society that generously grants a vital minimum of freedom to create is wrong to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

congratulate itself on its generosity. One felt some terrible misunderstanding in the brilliant hall where the journalists were identifying the "celebrities," the people with the Legion of Honor ribbons, or titles of nobility, the women wearing the latest creations of the designers and jewelers (the fashion magazine *Elle* had devoted a whole number to the question: "How dress for the Festival of the 20th Century?"); where the bediamonded Madame X and Countess Y were demonstrating their support for freedom of culture, and seemed to feel entitled to say, because Bartók and Berg had achieved fame, albeit posthumously, "This is our doing, thanks to us such works exist." No, it was not thanks to them that such works existed; their sole, and much more modest, title to gratitude was for having tolerated these obscure creations without even knowing anything about them, for having tolerated them out of indifference. And the fact is that this kind of indifference, when compared with the ruthless vigilance of totalitarian regimes, does become the very condition of freedom. The two claims, the one made by the creative artist on the stage, and the other by the well-heeled in the salon, have little, or nothing, in common. Perhaps the worldly and fashionable element could not be kept away from such an affair; without it, how could the festival have been financed and organized? But this is why it is risky to hold ideological festivals.

This is a minor side. The other risk of an ideological program is in the fact that it can be realized only in part, and the idea of the festival was general to an extreme: *"L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle"*—the French title being even more comprehensive and definitive than the English. In actual fact it was almost exclusively a festival of contemporary music, and it would have been better to give it a less pretentious title.

As a festival of music it was incomparably rich and varied, and never perhaps had that large a public been made so intensely interested in modern music—music, by the way, seldom played in concert halls; many of these works, beginning with Mahler's *Lied von der Erde*, dating from the end of last century, were having their first performance in Paris! Then in addition to the concerts, operas, and ballets, a splendid exhibition of painting and sculpture was offered. There were also lectures and literary discussions, and they were exactly what lectures and literary discussions could be expected to be when improvised as "poor relations" of the other arts—just to show that the organizers had taken care to include everything. The subjects were highly general: "the writer and the city," "revolt and communion," "diversity and universality," about which almost anybody can say everything and nothing in a twenty-minute speech. Completely absent from the "Masterpieces of the 20th Century" were: the theater (most inexplicable of the omissions); the film, surely the most 20th-centuryish of all the arts (true, it is celebrated constantly in the many Parisian art-movie clubs); architecture (for good material reasons); and finally, all that our half-century has produced in the way of technics, science, philosophy, and social study. In the last analysis, the "Masterpieces of the 20th Century" were music—music that was a revelation to the public. The music students of Paris had a unique opportunity to hear the whole gamut of the musical creations of our times—from the neo-classics and neo-Wagnerians to the "concrete music" vulgarly called "noise"—executed by the best orchestras of the Western world.

But even as regards only music, the ambitiousness with which the festival was heralded had its liabilities. A choice had to be made, and the selection of works to be performed, comprehensive as it was, could not but seem arbitrary and partisan when presented as the balance sheet of a half-century.

Unavoidably, there was offense given to a great many groups and sects, to numerous reputations and national prides, for nowhere do cliques proliferate as in contemporary music. And so, for example, the music critic of *Figaro* accused the organizers of the festival of constituting one more coterie, or something even less, "since the gods were excluded from it. . . ." These quarrels harassed the festival right along, and no one who had any part in it will ever be able to forget the name "Florent Schmitt," even though it did not appear on the program. After having begun by deploring the absence of at least a dozen other composers, all the French critics seem to have agreed to find the particular omission of Schmitt absolutely unpardonable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But why not that of Sibelius? Or Franz Lehar?

ABSURD as much of this criticism was, it must be admitted that the festival, while not excluding other aspects of the century, did concentrate on a very particular vision of our epoch.

A festival of Western civilization? One could with equal justice have called it a Russian festival. There were, of course, the works of composers of all sorts of tendencies and of every nationality, a third of them French (the presence of the latter being, for the most part, imposed by politeness rather than merit, their works were consigned to the margins of the gala evenings). But the great man whose ghost dominated the affair was Diaghilev: the whole thing brought to mind Diaghilev, his period, and his tremendous team; here were his scattered survivors and successors: the organizer Nabokov, Stravinsky and his ballet music, Balanchine and his company, the works that had been composed, the décors that had been painted, the librettos that had been written for the Russian ballets of Diaghilev. So that the most striking, if not the most valuable, aspect of the festival seemed to be a commemoration of the "great Parisian events" of *"la belle époque,"* the time, several decades back, when "life was beautiful." Stravinsky's *Firebird* was there with Chagall's sets; Prokofiev's *Prodigal Son* with sets by Rouault; the same Pierre Monteux, triumphantly directing Stravinsky's *Rites of Spring* in the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, where, directing the same work in 1913, he had been hissed. Fifteen years ago Stravinsky himself had directed his *Oedipus Rex*, his opera-oratio set to a Latin text, and there had been hisses because Cocteau, author, reciter, and inventor of *tableaux vivants* with surrealist marionettes, had pulled the Parisian public's leg a bit too openly; now applause greeted it.

All this made for a festival of nostalgia for the "good old days" so closely associated, in the minds of those who remember them, with the name of Sergei Diaghilev, that animator of the last *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total art-work) of our time—so much lighter, more elegant, and refined than Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*—linking music, dancing, painting, and poetry in the most fragile and ironically definitive ensemble. Here, too, nostalgia was expressed for the last genuine, heedless, and spontaneous cosmopolitanism as it had been incarnated in Diaghilev, amateur, connoisseur, and nobleman of a Russia that has disappeared. But how remote all that seems now! As remote, certainly, as the obsolete "1900" symbolism of the posters advertising the festival from the walls of Paris with a "trademark," showing a lyre, laurel branch, and star, that had been cooked up by the most expensive and conventional commercial designer in Paris: symbol of a rearguard festival.

Stravinsky himself is still lively and alert, and his powerful, faunlike personality, full of intelligence and of immense, smiling competence, completely dominated the "show." Solely by the fact of his presence, contemporary music seemed to divide into two schools, or, rather, into two directions and two temperaments: the way of Stravinsky—intellectual, eclectic, "Hellenistic," masterfully sending up fireworks in all styles and every sort of inspiration, capable of perfecting or parodying everything, Beethoven, Mozart, Verdi, by turns; on the other side were the "maniacs," the atonalists and their school, stubbornly following wherever their will to innovate leads, continually striving to create a unified style and inspiration by multiplying prohibitions and constraints. The contrast between the "hedonists" and the "ascetics" was a thrilling one: both sides had their successes and failures. But, finally, the "demonstration of the vitality of the West" ended on a note of interrogation.

For it must be said that Stravinsky cannot testify unambiguously to that vitality: the West, or Western Europe at least, is sick of the Hellenistic, and can take no joy in the prospect of any further exploitation of a heritage that a master juggler like Stravinsky dominates easily, but in the face of which others become dizzy. And his most powerful antagonist was not Schoenberg with his *Erwartung*, which served as a counterbalance to *Oedipus Rex*, but Alban Berg with his posthumous *Wozzeck*, a *tour de force* wrought into the most limpid and coherent quality by the multiplication of formal constraints. Yet *Wozzeck* is an end, not a beginning—it can hardly start a tradition or a school. Perhaps every work of genius is a dead end, definitive, representing the end of a road nobody can travel further.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A festival cannot but be retrospective; at best, it is a sort of museum of masterpieces that have already been acquired; and no retrospective show can ever prove anything about the future. It proves and approves the real value of the past; and this one in Paris did demonstrate that the works which had scandalized the public twenty-five years ago have by now become part of the patrimony of our civilization, having proved as valid as those that shocked people fifty or a hundred years ago. But there was another question: was this civilization still living? And was it really necessary to stage this sort of defensive operation to prove that it was not dead? Livingness is not proved by a roll call, and a recapitulation, however brilliant, creates nothing. The question to which the festival addressed itself was, indeed, poorly put.

THE farcical impression of a Russian festival was reinforced by the many sectarian quarrels, the most violent of which involved two successors of Diaghilev: Serge Lifar and Balanchine. A humorous Paris paper called the whole ferocious struggle "Slav Family Linen." The motives for a series of "open letters" to Mr. Nabokov with which Serge Lifar, master of the Opéra ballet, opened fire on the festival were perfectly clear: Balanchine's New York City Ballet had just appeared at the Opéra, while Lifar's Opéra ballet was not to perform with the other "Masterpieces of the 20th Century." But the issue had to be elevated into something more than a question of personal rivalry, and here was Serge Lifar, who had collaborated so shamelessly during the Occupation and been so useful to the Germans (for three years after the war all political parties and all Resistance groups had unanimously opposed his return to the Opéra)—here was this same Lifar mounted on the stuffed horse of French patriotism: the prestige of France was at stake. And *Combat*, once a great newspaper of the Resistance, did not shrink from setting in big type Lifar's incredible closing statement: "Gentlemen, I think you are mistaken; on the plane of culture, or civilization, of the spirit, FRANCE DOES NOT TAKE COUNSEL FROM ANYONE: SHE TEACHES OTHERS!"

Ridiculous as this appears, it was quite in tune with the general reaction of the Parisian press. The "American" festival, too rich, too lavish, and its publicity often lacking in modulation and tact, provoked an outburst of embittered and small-minded chauvinism of the worst kind—of cultural chauvinism. There is no point in taking up the vomitings of the Communist press on the "festival of the criminals of germ warfare." But the welcome from other quarters was not much more cordial. *Combat*, which considers itself the organ of the intellectual "left," devoted a political editorial to the "Festival of NATO," in which, of course, much reference was made to poorly educated barbarians from Alabama and Idaho, and to lynched Negroes in the South. But it was not so much the direct frontal attacks; it was rather the constant pinpricks, the bad humor, the little incidents that colored the atmosphere; and these expressed the reaction of a country—or rather, of its intellectual elite—that has always considered its own civilization to be the one unique and universally valid civilization extant, and which, having invented "cultural propaganda" and practiced it with the most remarkable effectiveness since the 17th century, all the more violently resents any enterprise in which it thinks it can discern the "cultural propaganda" of another country.

There were countless expressions of this wounded self-esteem, some touchingly naive. *Figaro* welcomed the Boston Symphony: "The Americans have landed, but under the command of a Frenchman" (Charles Munch); this was followed by a news story whose only point was the fact that twenty-three of the musicians in this magnificent orchestra were French. The "Florent Schmitt affair" is explained by the same obsession: whereas in most other countries artists coming from abroad would be expected to demonstrate the character and quality of their own culture, in France they are only expected to confirm the idea that everything valuable is French. In other countries a foreign writer present as a guest is expected to speak of his work, of his country, and his tradition; in France he is never expected to do more than express his admiration for Paris, for France, and for the French classics. And even then it will be held against him if he shows that he knows these too well. Thus *Figaro Littéraire*, which, from the political point of view, is as "Western" and "Atlantic" as you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could want, spoke of the pictures shown among "Masterpieces of the 20th Century" with a disdainful air, referring to the "painting of the 20th century that is to the American taste"; yet at least three-fourths of the works presented had been painted by Frenchmen. The reply, this time, came from an unexpected quarter: the neutralist Paris weekly *l'Observateur* remarked drily: "To speak of American taste in connection with an exhibition which has brought works to Paris that were for the most part painted here, and which our officials allowed to leave the country, and before which certain of our officials still turn up their noses . . . is surely ridiculous"; and added that the exhibition expressed "what is healthiest in the American attitude that is to say, its innate sense of the 'virginal and the always alive,' and the instinctive feeling for beauty that has not yet stopped being beautiful. . . . In short, the present exhibition testifies to an unconditional freedom in art quite above and outside any political tendency. . . ."

Here the positions were reversed: America, anti-academic and avant-garde in matters of art, rejoined the tradition of the French "left," and ran up against the official, conservative, academic France represented by *Figaro*. Here, again, the two questions at issue remained separate. Even more pronounced than the bad feeling was the confusion that surrounded the festival. The most absolute art was mixed up with the most realistic politics, and far too many people wondered whether their approval—or disapproval—would be entered to the account of Arnold Schoenberg or General Ridgway.

WAS the festival a failure or a success? It is too early to judge the more permanent effects. When the ruffled feelings are soothed, and the sectarian quarrels forgotten, what will remain? This brilliant show revealed no new inspiration, not one unknown talent, nothing not already consecrated; but it paid ample homage to what the half-century had achieved. Perhaps it made possible a deepened awareness of the richness of our civilization, a deeper feeling of there being a living heritage to defend, not so much because somebody came to prove and demonstrate this—anyone with eyes to see could observe the presence of this heritage, at every moment and on every street corner, in this city of Paris better than anywhere else—but because someone came with enough publicity to force recognition of the fact. For a while the chatter about the "decadence of the West" will be less tolerated simply because somebody dared to contradict it. Perhaps even the truth needs a Barnum.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEY WERE, WE ARE

JACOB SLOAN

HE WAS their text; they were
His commentary.

And we today who conceive His hill
Eroded by the workings of that sea
He once bade DIVIDE—by our will
Not to have been His—we
Who live in dread of our own history,
Not His, hang on His margins, still.

Although we do not hope to hear
His sound again, we cannot believe
That we must serve in His present fear,
Like them. Though we perceive
That they persisted and our end is near,
We prefer not to have been there:
Not to have been divided and aggrieved.
Not to have been holy; to despair.

So we must dare, since we so desire,
Not to be what we cannot choose.
They were elected and did not inquire
What we were born into and must refuse:
To walk between His truth and our lie,
Within our four ells, underneath His sky
—But ever in His firm and jealous view—
To fall out of our world, yet not to die.

Perhaps we would be happier to stand
Inside His temple or beside His gate,
Sleep in the smile of His open hand,
Wake to the cantillation of His state.
But we have journeyed past His promised land,
Past other mountains to another sand.
Here we must sink our well or tap our fate.
Decide, not divide, is our command.

DECIDE. No seas decide at our word.
We are the pillars and none pass between
Our will and the event. Absurd
To cry Alas at the vast obscene
(Man and destiny all overboard!)
Desert where no holy mountain roars
No! at our fickle feet.
Absurd to burn for a levitic sword.

It is not that we are fat in Zion
Already, on the garlic and the fish.
It is not the fleshpots of Mitzrayim,
Nor that manna is our daily dish.
Not that we fear to listen to our will,
But it is not hidden in His hill.
Not that we fly, or defy Him—but wish
To be united, to be human, to be still.

JACOB SLOAN, who is on the editorial staff of the *American Jewish Year Book*, has been a frequent contributor to this magazine with both poetry and criticism. He is the author of a volume of poetry, *Generation of Journey*. Mr. Sloan is a graduate of Brooklyn College and the Seminary College of Jewish Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE STUDY OF MAN

EXPLAINING THE REVOLUTION OF OUR TIME

Can Social Science Predict Its Course?

RICHARD H. S. CROSSMAN

WHY have the social sciences progressed so little during the last hundred years? In the 1850's it was confidently believed that the methods of natural science could be rapidly applied to the study of society; having learned to predict, and so to control, the development of his physical environment, man would soon be able to apply the same techniques in the mastery of human relations too. The "association of ideas" was regarded as a natural law of psychology as simple and all-pervasive as Newton's law of gravitation; and it was assumed that social behavior would soon be regulated according to Jeremy Bentham's "felicific calculus"—with each man maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain, and each free society harmonizing interests and so producing the greatest good of the greatest number. It seemed so obvious that once these laws had been understood and permitted free play the social engineers would be able to construct a rational and free society with the same assurance with which the railway engineers were constructing their railway systems.

Alas! These visions—popularized by such philosophers as Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer—were based on superficial and quite fallacious analogies between Newtonian physics and psychology. As their inadequacy became clear, they were replaced, towards the end of the century, by another set of analogies—equally superficial and fallacious—between biology and sociology, stimulated by Darwin's *Origin of Species*. This pseudo-science envisaged history as a struggle of individuals and social groups for survival, and concluded that any nation or social system which survived had thereby demonstrated its virtue. In answer to the challenge of Darwinism—the philosophy of a militant Free Enterprise—Karl Marx produced his counter social science on behalf of a militant Proletariat. Borrowing and turning upside down the Hegelian dialectic, he sought to extrapolate —that is, calculate future relations on the basis of past ones—and so to predict social evolution by fitting it into the straitjacket of class war. Social relations, which had previously been viewed as the rational behavior of self-interested individuals, were now to be explained "scientifically" in terms of irrational economic forces—just as later on, at the beginning of this century, Freudian psychology was to find the "scientific" explanation of individual behavior in the workings of an irrational unconscious.

So far, in the development of social science, it had always been tacitly assumed that there

---

THE Hoover Institute on War, Revolution, and Peace is sponsoring a major series of studies into the nature of the ruling groups in the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and the democratic countries. The project is part of a larger research undertaking known as RADIR—Revolution and Development of International Relations. Here, RICHARD H. S. CROSSMAN—as a member of Parliament himself a fairly recent accretion to Britain's ruling group—looks into four volumes so far published: *The World Revolution of Our Time*, by Harold D. Lasswell, a general introduction to the RADIR studies; *The Comparative Study of Elites*, by Harold D. Lasswell, Daniel Lerner and C. Easton Rothwell; *The Politburo*, by George K. Schueller; *The Nazi Elite*, by Daniel Lerner (Stanford University Press). Mr. Crossman is an editor of the *New Statesman and Nation* and writes frequently for COMMENTARY. His most recent article was "No German Rearming Without Atlantic Union," published in the December 1950 issue.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must be some substance (the individual mind, or economic class, or the unconscious) underlying human society and corresponding to the matter or atoms which formed the unanalyzable basis of 19th-century physical science. But when the physicists began to question the existence of basic "matter," and probability replaced natural law in physics and chemistry, the fashion in social science suffered a corresponding change. Statistics, based on "samples," replaced the crude laws of psychological association, and the sociologist began to evolve quantitative techniques—such as the public opinion poll—as his correlative to the new nuclear physics.

My contention, indeed, is that ever since Aristotle started on the job the social scientist's attempts to classify societies or political institutions have been imitated from botany and zoology, and his "social laws" have been little better than adaptations of the natural science prevalent in his age. The natural scientist demonstrates that his discoveries are true by showing that, within limits, he can use them to predict the future: indeed, a scientific law means a statistical prediction, verified by observation. In an effort to rate as respectably "scientific," the social scientist borrows the current categories of natural science and applies them to human relations. Unlike the natural scientist, however, he has usually been unable to verify his predictions. What he succeeds too often in doing is to express in complicated statistical terms what had already been observed by the non-scientific historian.

These reflections are reinforced by a reading of the first four volumes of the Hoover Institute Studies, which have been given the resounding title of the RADIR Project ("Revolution and Development of International Relations"). Mr. Daniel Lerner is the Director of Research, and Professor Harold Lasswell the presiding genius of this very considerable enterprise, which is financed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This is how Mr. Lerner and Professor Lasswell describe their objective: "The object of the project on Revolution and the Development of International Relations (RADIR) is to describe and explain the 'world revolution of our time.' More specifically, its purpose is to make clear the major trends of social change throughout the world within the past six decades, to estimate their direction, intensity, and tempo, and to seek explanations of their significance. Because of our concern with a developing world community in which democratic values shall prevail, we seek to describe these changes in relation to four principal goal values: shared power, shared respect, shared well-being, and shared safety. It is with these values as compass points that we attempt to locate the direction of change and to help reveal the significance of the vast revolution that is reshaping our contemporary world."

No one can object to a project with such an edifying aim. Mr. Lerner and Professor Lasswell are staunch democrats, "in step with ideal values of the American tradition and with the progressive ideologies of our epoch." Their hope is that "the historic trend away from caste societies will continue until the free man's commonwealth is achieved on a global stage." This hope, as professional social scientists, they find it necessary to describe as a "developmental construct." A "developmental construct," we are told, is the characterization of "a possible sequence of events running from a selected cross-section of the past to a cross-section of the future." (Some of us who are old-fashioned used to call this a guess about the future. But never mind.) Mr. Lerner and Professor Lasswell recognize that they are faced with a rival "developmental construct," namely that ". . . the direction of history is reversing itself, and moves towards the restoring of caste. More specifically: Assuming that the world crisis of insecurity continues, power and other values will be further concentrated in a few hands in the name of providing for the common defense. As the world is bipolarized between the United States and the Soviet Union, perpetual crisis favors the loss of freedom, and the eventual consolidation of garrison-police states. . . . In the end, if the process is carried to the logical (thinkable) conclusion, the leaders of the garrison-police state will constitute the top layer of the new caste system."

Apparently the aim of the RADIR Project is to apply the latest methods of social science in order to discover which of these "developmental constructs" (or guesses) will be confirmed by history. Shall we advance towards a free man's global commonwealth, inspired by the values of the American tradition, or will the world be polarized into contending police states?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reading the first fruits of their research, I am ready to enunciate a law about social science. The verifiability of any research which purports to extrapolate and predict social developments is *in inverse proportion* to its social importance. It is quite possible, by means of consumer research, for instance, to state scientifically whether Americans (or Englishmen) prefer their chocolates in a black or white box; and the success of this prediction can be measured by the graph of the sales achieved by rival firms. It is also possible to study electoral preferences in the same way, and any party boss is well advised to use these market research techniques in selecting his merchandise for the political market, though he may let himself in for unpleasant surprises at times. Of course, no one can deny that statistical methods can be used, within narrow limits, to predict developments in human behavior. They are useful auxiliary instruments in the task of political, as of commercial, salesmanship. What they can never become without disaster is a guide either to statesmanship or to the writing of history.

LET ME state the reason why. Professor Lasswell and Mr. Lerner are anxious to serve the cause of American democracy by putting social science at its service in the struggle for a free society. Their aim, presumably, is to improve the quality of American statesmanship by enabling Americans to understand the "revolution in which they are all living" and permitting them to foresee the trend of history. But, in dealing with broad historical trends, statistical methods are at least as likely to confuse as to clarify. And for two reasons. In the first place, the assumptions on which their extrapolations are based are usually not neutral scientific hypotheses but value judgments, or, to put it more bluntly, prejudices. Try as hard as we may, we cannot make history "scientific." And, if we pretend that we are doing so, we either cloak our prejudices in scientific language and so blunt our vision, as the Stalinites have done in Russia; or else we do succeed in remaining strictly scientific, in which case our researches degenerate into an insignificant jumble of statistical tables that offer the unfortunate politician or historian who looks to them for advice an infinite variety of possibilities to choose from, without any standard by which to choose.

The second limitation on the contribution of social science to the study of human behavior is, of course, the nature of free will. What distinguishes human from natural evolution is precisely the ability of man to change society by defying the observed patterns of behavior. If we seek to defy the laws of our physical environment by jumping off a cliff or by building a house in defiance of the observed behavior of bricks and steel, we suffer the predicted consequences. But the advances towards freedom have been achieved by defying the trends of history. The social mutations which have enlarged our freedom of choice have nearly always been the jump in the dark of an outstanding genius or a new, dynamic social group—acts of will, in despite of observed social laws. Thus a social science which lays large claims to being "scientific" is always in danger of straitjacketing the human will it seeks to liberate.

National Socialism had a "scientific" theory of race, Communism has one of class and social evolution; and in both Germany and Russia there grew up a breed of social scientists ready to give elaborate scientific justifications for these inroads on human freedom. The free man's response to such scientific ideologies is not a counter-ideology, or a counter social science, but a denunciation of all ideologies as such, and an exposure of every attempt to confine human will power and social change within predictable patterns.

Suppose, for instance, that Professor Lasswell and Mr. Lerner, after two or three years more of sociological research, come to the conclusion (which has already been reached by Mr. Toynbee) that the trend of history is against the free society and in favor of totalitarianism. Will that affect in any way the American determination to fight for the free society? Of course not. Men fight better against odds, as Mr. Churchill discovered in 1940, when, by all the laws of statistics, he would have been well advised to surrender to Hitler. To show us what is statistically likely to happen can neither teach us what we ought to do nor yet reveal to us the "laws" of social change. It was the complete defiance by the early Christians of the trend of history which finally enabled Christianity to conquer the Roman Empire. It was because its missionaries were prepared to lose their lives that they saved their faith from extinction. Those who let the trend of history influence their value judgments form the vast majority

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the human race—but they contribute nothing to the enlargement of freedom. That enlargement is accomplished by the tiny minority who confute predictions based on observed patterns of behavior by a belief in the impossible.

WE CAN express this critique of the claims of social science to study revolution in yet another way. The patterns of behavior of a stable, unchanging society (a primitive, savage community, for instance) can be observed, classified, and even broken down into quantitative sociological laws. But what differentiates civilized from primitive society is precisely the fact that its observed patterns are constantly being changed by acts of human will. To seek for the "laws" which determine social change (as Marx certainly did, and as the authors of the Hoover Studies seem inclined to do) is to fetter the future in the chains of the past. For the sociologist can only predict the unknown future insofar as he assumes that it is determined by the known past, i.e. so long as it contains no new mutations caused by acts of free will.

Of course, for many purposes we are entitled to make this assumption. Even within a civilized, changing community—the United States, for instance—there will be countless types of behavior that repeat themselves in almost identical form. We are creatures of habit and custom, and our freedom is rooted in usage. The social scientist can successfully study these established patterns of behavior—the net reproductive rate of a country, for instance; its rate of capital investment; or even (where democracy has become a habit) its voting patterns. What the social scientist can never do—except at the risk of making himself look extremely silly, or else falling into totalitarian habits of thought—is to explain the laws of change or, in the words of Professor Lasswell, "the revolution in which we live." For if this revolution is a genuine revolution, then it is one of those mutations which will change the framework of our existence and the categories of our thinking, and so invalidate the past as a guide to the future.

Let me give one example to illustrate what I mean. Looking back now on the Russian Revolution, it is easy for the social scientist and the historian to treat the conquest of power by the Bolsheviks as something "inevitable." With the hindsight of history we see the process which led from the Kerensky revolution to the establishment of the Stalinite dictatorship as a chain of cause and effect. The present seems to determine and so to explain the past. But this is the optical illusion of hindsight. As Trotsky himself pointed out in a famous passage in his *History,* without the genius of Lenin the Bolsheviks could never have succeeded. Here was one of those completely unpredictable mutations in human history caused by a man of genius. A sociologist who studied the Russian situation in 1917, and tried to extrapolate the past into the future, could have predicted at least fifteen possible developments of the Kerensky revolution, and assessed their varying degrees of probability. But the last thing which any reasonable and well-informed person could have foretold was what actually happened. There was nothing inevitable about Lenin's success, and, since there was nothing inevitable, there was nothing *predictable* by social science.

LET US now turn from a study of philosophical presuppositions to an examination of the special techniques which the directors of the Hoover Institute Studies have invented in order to examine the Revolution of Our Time. All these booklets lay special emphasis on statistical sampling methods, and three of them are exclusively concerned with the study of elites. "The elite concept," they write, "fills a blank in the language of science and policy." Again, "Changes in the elite structure are indexes of revolution." And again, "Elite studies are the heart of research into the world revolution of our time, since an essential criterion of revolution is change in elite structure." And, finally, revolution is defined as "rapid and extensive change in the composition and the vocabulary of the ruling few." This hypothesis was first adopted by Pareto in his famous theory of the circulation of elites, and popularized by James Burnham in his *Managerial Revolution.* It is a natural reaction against Marx's economic determinism to assume that the leadership causes the revolution instead of being thrown up by its class forces; and this reaction is justified to a large extent by the growth of the power of the state during the 20th century. At a time when control of the instruments of coercion and persuasion can give total power, it is futile to describe the state as "the executive committee of the bourgeoisie," and to suggest that power is the monopoly of one social class. The theory of elites is, from this point of view, merely the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

return to the traditional view that the science of politics is the study of power.

The novelty of Pareto's work—further developed in the Hoover Institute Studies—is the hypothesis that the inner law of revolution is to be discovered by studying the social composition of ruling groups or elites. Instead of observing the aims and purposes of a regime, or analyzing the economic forces behind it, we should concentrate on a study of its social structure: who are its rulers, from what classes are they drawn, what are their occupations, what wealth do they possess? The obvious convenience for the social scientist of this hypothesis is that it permits him to apply his favorite techniques to the study of a revolution. The social structure of an elite can be quantified by scientific sampling: we can say what percentage of the American, or Russian, or Nazi elite were workers or engineers. But this advantage is outweighed by the distortion of fact which is introduced. To begin with, the tacit and illegitimate assumption has to be made that in all modern states (in the United States and Britain, as well as in the USSR and Nazi Germany) there exists an elite to be sampled and quantified. An essentially totalitarian concept is applied universally to all communities with a distortion as baleful as that caused by the Marxian doctrine of class. Just who, in America or Britain, is to be defined as "elite"? If social scientists would substitute "ruling class" for "elite," this distortion would be too obvious to be overlooked.

But let us see if Professor Lasswell's bold assertions can be justified by studies of particular revolutions. So far, we have a study of the Nazi elite by Mr. Lerner, and of the Politburo by Mr. Schueller. Can we claim that either of these two examples of "elite study" adds to our understanding of the "revolution of our time"?

Mr. Lerner candidly explains to us his method of research in his opening pages. He has taken the Nazi *Fuehrerlexikon*, the *Who's Who* of Nazism, published in 1934, and subjected the 1,600 biographies it contains to various kinds of statistical analysis. In certain cases he has compared the results he obtains with comparable data on the membership of the whole Nazi party and of the whole German population. On the basis of this he provides us with eighty-four statistical tables.

Before commenting on Mr. Lerner's conclusions, I must, in fairness, quote a judgment of Professor Lasswell on the use of the statistical method. "It is sometimes falsely assumed that statistical modes of description and correlation are supposed to eliminate other ways of characterizing current or historic happenings, such as the interpretative essay. We have suggested that this assumption is mistaken. . . . *It is not a question of eliminating significance but of enlarging relevance.*" This is a perfectly fair test, but I fear that if we apply it to Mr. Lerner, he fails abjectly. For one reader, at least, he did nothing to "enlarge relevance." I could find no single result of his computations which could not be learned from any competent history of National Socialism. Indeed, there is scarcely one of his eighty-four tables which is intelligible without an interpretative essay that would, at the same time, render it unnecessary. On page 28 Mr. Lerner solemnly writes: "Professional intellectuals live, occupationally, by their output of symbols in spoken and written form. Since we are here interested in demonstrating only the degree of professionalism as intellectuals, not the quality of thought, we adduce as a relevant indicator the amount of printed symbolic output among propagandists and administrators."

And this is followed by:

TABLE 21. NUMBER OF PUBLICATIONS

	Propagandists	Administrators	Random
Occasional Pamphlets	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Regular Pamphlets	0.0	0.0	0.0
Occasional Articles	12.0	8.6	12.6
Regular Articles	26.0	24.5	18.2
1 Book	1.0	0.6	3.8
2 Books	6.0	3.3	1.3
3 Books	7.0	2.6	1.9
4 Books	0.0	1.3	2.5
5 Books	0.0	0.0	2.5
6 Books	0.0	0.7	1.3
More than 6 Books	13.0	2.0	5.0
Unknown	8.0	3.3	0.6
None	23.0	53.0	52.2
Total	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%
(Number)	(100)	(151)	(159)

We really do not need an elaborate statistical sample in order to discover that Nazi propagandists published more books and articles than Nazi administrators. Table 56, to take another example, proves to us that German army officers listed in the *Fuehrerlexikon* are likely to be better born than German policemen, a fact which any student of German history must be aware of. Fortunately, Mr. Lerner

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

knows a lot about contemporary Germany and, in between his statistical tables, he inserts some paragraphs of interpretative essay. These paragraphs would have been all the better if he had dispensed with his samples altogether and accepted as his starting point that the character of Adolf Hitler had a lot more to do with the Nazi revolution than the backgrounds of all the "little Hitlers" who formed his elite.

In *The Politburo,* on the other hand, Mr. Schueller has provided us with a useful source book. But the reason why it is useful is that it is not perceptibly "scientific." Since there have been only twenty-seven members of the Politburo since it began, the sampling method is obviously inappropriate. What we are therefore given are quite useful canned biographies of these twenty-seven men, from which Mr. Schueller is able to draw some quite interesting conclusions. In particular, he contrasts the characteristics of the Old Bolsheviks, who carried out the revolution, with those of the new type of Stalinite administrator now taking their place. *The Politburo* is a solid, rather dully written notebook, such as any old-fashioned historian might put together for his private use before he got down to the serious job of writing a book. I have a horrible suspicion that Mr. Schueller feels that he would not have been a really scientific social scientist if, after roughing this material out, he had put it under his desk and composed a historical essay. This is a pity. A furnished house is really more useful than some scaffolding, bricks, and mortar, along with a pile of fitments and furniture. A historical essay is none the worse because the research that has to precede it has been tidied away for the pleasure of the reader. Certainly no historian would end with the sentence Mr. Schueller has selected to conclude his study: "In general, it may be said that while there are some similarities between the leadership of Soviet Russia and that of the Western world, the dissimilarities are much greater and more important."

Would Professor Lasswell seriously maintain that this portentous platitude "enlarges relevance"?

I MUST regretfully conclude that the whole attempt to explain the German and Russian revolutions by elite sampling seems to me to be a lapse into pseudo-science more ridiculous than anything perpetrated by Marx's successors or imitators. Marx himself provided for at least two generations a magnificent, if distorting, framework for social studies. His economic analysis of history was brilliantly relevant to the age of expanding capitalism in which he lived; and, if it now blinds the student more than it illuminates, that is not surprising, considering the date of *Das Kapital.* I can foresee no such future for the Hoover Studies.

In the first place, the assumption on which they are based—that the background of those who wield power is a determining factor in revolution—is a mere variant of vulgar Marxism and suffers from the same defect, that it neglects the factor of individual genius and human will power. In the second place, the method of sampling seems to me singularly ill-suited to an inquiry into totalitarian elites, whose members, by definition, are likely to be persons of exceptional, if unpleasant, character. The sheep in any state can perhaps be studied in the mass and their behavior quantitatively assessed. Surely the shepherds need individual observation.

Strange, that a group of Americans, sincerely concerned to defend the dignity of the individual, should believe that we can learn something relevant about the nature of world revolution by mechanically submitting the canned biographies of *Who's Who* to statistical analysis. That was not the sense in which our epoch was once called "the century of the common man."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS FROM READERS

Liberty and the Liberal

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mr. Joseph L. Rauh Jr., in his letter in the May COMMENTARY, fully exposed the feebleness of Mr. Irving Kristol's civil liberties article published in the March issue of COMMENTARY. Mr. Kristol's rejoinder, however, contains one statement so extraordinary, so disingenuous, and so symptomatic that I trust you will permit me to make a few words of comment on it.

Mr. Kristol had originally asserted that the "major segment of American liberalism" had gone down the line for Stalinism, swallowing Soviet concentration camps, the liquidation of the kulaks, the purges, etc.; the New Dealers, he said, were "stained with the guilt of having lent aid and comfort to Stalinist tyranny." Mr. Rauh in his letter pointed out that the New Dealers had, in fact, done none of these things. Mr. Kristol in his rejoinder sought to "prove" his charge by citing the fact that 400 American liberals signed an open letter in 1939 defending the Soviet Union.

No doubt Mr. Kristol counted on the ignorance or the gullibility of his readers. I have just examined the list of the 400 liberals. Of the 400 names, the *single one* which can possibly qualify as a New Dealer is that of Professor Robert Morss Lovett, who subsequently served as governor of the Virgin Islands. This fact amply suggests the character of Mr. Kristol's argument.

Mr. Kristol does not seem to know what a New Dealer was. A New Dealer, by any sensible definition, was someone whose primary allegiance was to the New Deal. Let me name a few: Tom Corcoran, Ben Cohen, Leon Henderson, Harold Ickes, Harry Hopkins, William O. Douglas, Jerome Frank, Adolph Berle, Francis Biddle, Thurman Arnold, Felix Frankfurter, Robert H. Jackson, David Lilienthal, Marriner Eccles, Isador Lubin, Sam Rosenman, Paul Porter. . . . The list could be continued indefinitely. None of them signed Mr. Kristol's document. None of them defended slave-labor camps or the Moscow Trials or the extermination of the kulaks. None of them contended for Soviet foreign policy or for American Communism. A few of them lent their names to organizations ostensibly devoted to useful American purposes, like the Lawyers Guild or the American Student Union; but as soon as Stalinist influence became evident in these organizations, the New Dealers left them.

A FEW Communists wormed their way into the New Deal, of course, at the price of concealing their affiliations and their party views; this was to be expected. Communists in the same period infiltrated every important government, including the Nazi government of Germany. But, as I have sought to show elsewhere, the only New Deal agency where a case can be plausibly made for Stalinist influence on major policy was the National Labor Relations Board in 1939-40; even here it is not clear that the Stalinists had consistent or decisive influence; and, in any case, their role was known and their leaders were purged by the White House in 1940.

The essential inhospitality of the New Deal to Communism is amply and conclusively shown by the elaborately conspiratorial role the Communists had to take when attempting to penetrate the New Deal. They could hardly have been more clandestine in their operations, or have taken more precautions against exposure, if they had been infiltrating an administration headed by Senator Joseph McCarthy.

The trouble with Mr. Kristol is that—as his citation of the 1939 pro-Soviet document shows—he identifies the Popular Front psychology, so prevalent among the New York intellectuals, with the psychology of the New Dealers. Mr. Kristol's remarks are perfectly accurate when applied to the Popular Front mind; and the Popular Front mind, God knows, did a good deal to debauch American liberalism in t 30's. It is these people who, in Mr. Kristol's phrase, were "stained with the guilt of having lent aid and comfort to Stalinist tyranny." It was also these same people who regarded the New Deal with patronizing contempt as an idiotic attempt to save a system already sentenced to death by dogma; it was these same people who understood nothing about the holding company act or rural electrification or compensatory fiscal policy—nothing about the New Deal except how to live off the writers' and artists' projects of WPA.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But the obsession with the Soviet Union which dominated New York in the 30's was not shared in Washington. The New Dealers were busy a good twenty-four hours a day fighting unemployment, reforming the securities exchange, working out fiscal and budgetary policy, enacting decent labor and social welfare legislation, conserving the natural resources, and doing a thousand other things to keep the system going. The essential ideological difference between the New Dealer and the Popular Front intellectual was that the New Dealer believed that recovery and reform were possible within a democratic capitalist system, while the Popular Front intellectual believed that the capitalist system was finished. The emotional difference was that the New Dealer believed in doing concrete, practical things to save the nation, while the Popular Fronter luxuriated in guilt, dogma, and the politics of apocalypse. It is the old, crucial difference between the doers and the wailers.

IN SHORT, while the New Dealers were saving the system, the New York intellectuals were paralyzed by the hysterical vision that democracy and capitalism were through and that the proletarian revolution was about to take over. Too many New York intellectuals have the same vision and the same hysteria today—though what they once regarded with delight, they now dread. And they are not the slightest bit more reliable in their views of American politics than they were in the days of the *Modern Quarterly*.

At some point, it might occur to the New York intellectuals that, if the New Deal had not succeeded in restoring the national faith in free institutions, America would really have faced an internal Communist problem.

ARTHUR SCHLESINGER JR.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Mr. Kristol Replies

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Somehow or other Mr. Schlesinger has confused me with John T. Flynn. Or perhaps it is simply that, after many years of research in the history of the New Deal, he is primed for a debate with Mr. Flynn and does not intend to let a mere case of mistaken identity interfere with his pleasure. So I suppose I shall have to repeat here what I said both in my article and in my reply to Mr. Rauh: that I am as desirous as they are of defending the heritage of the New Deal in its essential respects, and that a criticism of Alan Barth's version of the present situation of our civil liberties does not imply an attack on social security or unemployment insurance or the graduated income tax.

Nevertheless, there remains a real dispute over my assertion that "the major segment of American liberalism" in the 30's showed a high tolerance for Stalinist iniquity. This question is a tangled one, not to be answered by counting noses—for even after they were all counted, they would still have to be weighed, and the scales for this have not yet been invented. Much depends on one's memories and lasting impressions of that period; and my own are quite unambiguous, nor are they in any way exceptional or idiosyncratic. For example, shortly after the Stalin-Hitler pact John Haynes Holmes delivered a sermon in which he said:

"If we liberals were right on certain single aspects of the Russian Revolution, we were wrong, disgracefully wrong, on the question as a whole. We were wrong because, in our . . . vision of a new world springing from the womb of this Russian experiment, we permitted ourselves to condone wrongs that we knew must be wrongs. . . . We defended, or at least apologized for, evils in the case of Russia which horrified us wherever else they appeared, and by whomsoever else they were done."

Now, perhaps Mr. Holmes had no authority to speak for the liberalism of the 30's. He certainly knew that there were liberals (like John Dewey and Sidney Hook) who had been staunchly anti-Communist during the time when he was not. Yet, in delivering this sermon, he was obviously of the opinion that the "major segment" of American liberalism had done the things he excoriated. Maybe he was suffering from an optical illusion. On the other hand, maybe Mr. Schlesinger is.

The distinction Mr. Schlesinger draws between the New York Popular Fronters and the Washington New Dealers may be a very useful one. (Though his animus against "New York intellectuals" has about it, surprisingly, a familiarly vulgar and philistine air.) It is doubtless true that the New Dealers as a group were more interested in practical reforms than in ideology, and that they did not generally indulge in the uninhibited deceit of the *Nation* and *New Republic* with regard to such matters as the Soviet purges or Siberian labor camps. But it is also true that most New Dealers, at one time or another, found the Popular Front ideology extremely congenial, and that very, very few ever found occasion to assail it. (I well recall the difficulty that the anti-Communist factions in the student movement had in getting New Dealers to address *their* meetings.) Of the names that Mr. Schlesinger mentions, at least four were, to my own limited knowledge, associated with organizations that actively pushed the Popular Front line. (Har-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

old Ickes was even the president of one—and this after the war!) Probably they were simply "taken in," but it is significant that they were taken in by the Popular Front and not by its liberal critics. I am also intrigued by the names that Mr. Schlesinger did *not* mention: Where, one wonders, is Henry Wallace? Or Eleanor Roosevelt? Or Aubrey Williams? Or Lauchlin Currie? Or Harry Dexter White? Or Claude Pepper? Or Lawrence Duggan?

MR. SCHLESINGER is anxious to defend the New Deal against the accusation that it was a wicked Communist plot. But I never made any such accusation and would just as soon not be refuted for it. I do believe that the Popular Fronters were, on the whole, more influential in the Roosevelt administrations than Mr. Schlesinger seems to think; but this, so far as I can see, was more true after 1941, when F.D.R. had already buried the New Deal, and applies mainly to secondary and tertiary governmental levels, not top ones. (Communist sympathizers didn't have to "infiltrate" such departments as the Bureau of Economic Warfare, the OWI, and the OSS—they walked in the front door.) In any case, my point had nothing to do with New Deal *policies*, but with the state of mind of "the major segment of American liberalism" in the 30's. It's all very well for Mr. Schlesinger to sneer at New York intellectuals. But when, for instance, the "New York [*sic*] intellectuals" involved in the Communist-dominated League of American Writers included such men as Van Wyck Brooks, Archibald MacLeish (later Assistant Secretary of State), Lewis Mumford, Upton Sinclair, Ernest Hemingway, and Thornton Wilder, one feels that Mr. Schlesinger is being more than a bit presumptuous.

Mr. Schlesinger makes a fuss about my passing reference to the open letter of the 400, which I did not use to "prove" anything (the word and the quotation marks are both his) but presented merely as a convenient illustration. I will concede that, for various reasons, a better illustration could have been chosen, and that this was a poor one, but not primarily because it includes "only one" New Dealer (why limit the term to office-holders? doesn't someone like Max Lerner merit the description?). What is wrong with this list of "400" names which Mr. Schlesinger has examined is that it is probably largely fictitious. Shortly after the May issue of COMMENTARY came out, I was reminded by Richard Rovere of a fact that I had once read in Eugene Lyons' *The Red Decade*, and had since forgotten: only 165 signatures were published by the *Daily Worker* —the remaining 235 were just claimed. It is more than likely that they were phantom signatures—one surely can't take the *Daily Worker*'s word on it—and that what is customarily referred to as the document of the 400 was 235 shy of the figure. I am sorry to have helped give currency to the mythical total and, in the process, to have misled Mr. Schlesinger.

SIMPLY to correct Mr. Westin's misstatements (in his article on page 33 of this issue) as to what I actually said would require a reply almost as long as my original article. To take one example, he writes: "The University of California faculty oath, in Mr. Kristol's eyes, was merely a case of a university establishing a justified policy of not hiring Communists and fellow-travelers." Now here is what I did say about the California oath: "I was and am opposed to it, as I am opposed to all loyalty oaths added to the standard pledge to uphold our constitutional form of government. They serve no purpose whatsoever. The first to sign are always the Communists, and it is those non-Communists who oppose them as a matter of conscience who are 'rooted out.'"

To cite all such instances of flagrant misreading would be good polemical fun, but would have little bearing on the problem of civil liberties. So I shall limit myself to a few brief, general observations on Mr. Westin's mode of thinking.

Mr. Westin does not seem to know what civil liberties are—which is inevitably a handicap, if one is all set to defend them. A civil liberty is a freedom conferred by our Constitution and our laws; it is *not* something dreamed up by Mr. Westin, the *Yale Law Journal*, or anyone else, and bestowed at will. There are many cogent arguments against permitting a witness before a Congressional committee to cross-examine another witness, but it is nevertheless Mr. Westin's privilege to believe it desirable and to urge that current procedures be revised; what he cannot claim is that the prohibition against cross-examination violates a (non-existent) "right" to cross-examination. Both Mr. Westin and I would be happier if Congressional members of investigating committees were more intelligent, better informed, less factional; that they are not, however, is no violation of anyone's civil liberties.

It is not astonishing that, corresponding to this confusion over the idea of civil liberties, there is also confusion over the facts. The Hollywood Ten did not invoke the Fifth Amendment against compulsory self-incrimination, but rested their case on the First Amendment, pleading that freedom of speech included freedom *from* speech, even before a Congressional committee; the Supreme Court decided

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

against them. (If the Court had decided otherwise, any Congressional investigation would be doomed to futility—even an investigation of the "China Lobby" which, I think I can safely assume, Mr. Westin very much wants.) In every case so far, a witness's plea of possible self-incrimination has been sufficient to render him immune from any legal action for contempt.

Mr. Westin seems to think that the civil liberties of Harold Christoffel, Philip Jessup, John Stewart Service, and Owen Lattimore have been infringed upon. This is nonsense. Harold Christoffel testified before a Congressional committee that he was not a member of the Communist party, and he is now charged with perjury. Is Mr. Westin saying that there is a "right" to lie under oath? Philip Jessup was refused confirmation by the U. S. Senate. Which one of his "rights" was thereby violated? John Stewart Service was discharged as a poor security risk. Does he or anyone else have a "right" to a job in the State Department for which his superiors think him unfit? Owen Lattimore was called upon to testify before the McCarran Committee about the political tendency of his activities in the Institute of Pacific Relations and in his various important government jobs. How did this violate his civil liberties?

Mr. Westin appears to labor under the misimpression that our society once passed an FEPC law for Communists; it has not, nor is it likely to. A Communist has no more "right" to act in movies than he has to be on the professional staff of the American Civil Liberties Union. There is little cause for concern in the one case, and rather more in the other; but in neither is there any issue of a "right to work."

Perhaps Mr. Westin is of the opinion that the Senate was unwise in not confirming Mr. Jessup, or that the State Department acted unfairly in firing Mr. Service. But he ought surely to know that just because an action is stupid or unjust it does not follow that it is a transgression of civil liberties. There are, unfortunately, too many people who feel petulantly that their "civil liberty" is damaged insofar as the world they live in does not conform exactly to their wishes. They confuse earth and high heaven, and one suspects that they are probably in for some surprises when they reach the latter, too.

Mr. Westin indulges in exactly the same kind of glib disingenuousness that I criticized in my original article. Thus, he refers ironically to "the danger to American society from a Communist's being treated with procedural fairness before the McCarran Committee." I challenge him to name one Communist who was not treated with "procedural fairness." He cannot—for the very simple reason that all the Communists who appeared before the Committee refused to testify on grounds of possible self-incrimination. He also defends *habeas corpus* and due process of law—but from whom? Let him name one Communist whose right to *habeas corpus* was flouted or who was subjected to legal penalty without due process. He cannot—for there is none.

My own attitude toward the question of the civil rights of Communists is that of Judge Learned Hand, as expressed in his opinion on the Smith Act: the Communist movement is a conspiracy to subvert the institutions, and overthrow the government, of the United States, and there is no "right" to take part in any such conspiracy. To be sure, this conspiracy at the moment, though capable of much mischief, is not a menacing one. That is why I believe, as stated in my original article, that we may extend to Communists, at this time and in certain areas of our society, a toleration and freedom to which they have no moral or legal right.

IRVING KRISTOL

New York City

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS IN REVIEW

Immigrant Groups in Politics

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN POLITICS. By SAMUEL LUBELL. Harper. 285 pp. $3.50.

Reviewed by NATHAN GLAZER

SAMUEL LUBELL'S *The Future of American Politics* is, in this reviewer's opinion, the best book yet written on American politics of the last twenty years; and if a better one should appear, it is hard to see how it could be anything but a further development of the basic pattern laid down by Lubell.

Most of what Lubell has to say is by way of explaining the series of Democratic victories that began in 1932. What makes the book so valuable is that in doing so he entirely ignores accepted political platitudes, liberal, conservative, or reactionary, and proceeds directly to examine American society; and not in the large, but in its most specific and concrete detail. The explanations we are all bored with (and unconvinced by) — that the American people have lost faith in the old-time virtues of enterprise, hard work, economy, or frugality; or that they rose against concentrated economic power in the depression and, despite the unparalleled prosperity of 1944 and 1948, have kept on rising as a matter of reflex action; or that they have shown their resolute attachment to the principles of the New Deal (despite the irresolution that has regularly characterized off-year voting since 1938)—all this plays no role at all in his book.

Lubell is a historian of precincts, not platitudes. He argues, with a display of statistical and historical facts unique in political journalism and rare in political science and sociology, that the basis of Democratic strength is the children of the immigrants who came to this country between 1900 and the First World War. These 13,000,000 immigrants did not, like the millions who preceded them, find their way to Midwest farms: they settled in the cities. In 1910, more than two out of every three children in the schools of such cities as Chelsea, Fall River, New Bedford, Duluth, New York, and Chicago were the children of immigrants. The chief concerns of the politics of the beginning of this century—the great battles between the Midwestern and Southern farmers and the Eastern corporations—meant little to these city dwellers. If they were in politics, they could generally be enrolled by the dominant machine. But despite the Republican allegiance of one or another immigrant group, the masses of immigrants and their children were fated to become Democrats. Depression or no depression, Lubell argues, the 30's had to be a Democratic era. Wilson had already enlisted the loyalty of many of the immigrants for the Democratic party. Their children, bearing strange names and struggling to escape the unskilled labor that was their fathers' fate, felt a resentment at their circumstances which the Democrats, long based in the North on an earlier immigrant group, the Irish, knew how to assuage with patronage and sympathy, but which the Republicans knew or cared nothing about. And then of course the immigrants' children in the cities came of age in the greatest numbers during the depression, which gave them, in addition to their resentment at being the children of the less favored "newer" immigration, a further resentment caused by economic hardship.

Even in the heyday of Republican prosperity, the immigrants' children produced a subtle but crucial revolution in the structure of American politics. In 1920 and 1924, the Republicans piled up huge majorities in the twelve largest American cities. In 1928, when the Democratic candidate, for the first time since Wilson, was a friend of the underprivileged—the intervening Democratic candidates had been conservatives —these twelve largest cities showed a small majority for Al Smith.

In a convincing analysis of the city vote for Smith, Lubell shows that while he swept those cities dominated by the East European immigrants and their children, he lost those inhabited by a different breed of migrant—those who had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

moved from farm to city, and particularly from South to North. For during the 20's, no less than 6,500,000 farm dwellers had moved to the cities, and a Catholic candidate could make no headway in places like Detroit and Akron, which are in large measure Southern cities. Not until Roosevelt was the Democratic victory complete: he appealed to the native element of the great new city masses as well as to the immigrant groups, gaining the same majorities in Detroit and Akron that Al Smith had piled up in Boston and New York. From 1932 to 1936 the government, for the first time in American history, acted on a major scale in favor of the city dwellers who had elected it, and in 1936 Roosevelt carried every city in the country with a population over 100,000. The Democratic city majorities have been responsible for every victory since.

BUT this is only the beginning of Lubell's story. For while the Democratic big-city majority has been large enough to elect Democratic presidents, it is no monolithic majority. We have spoken of the "immigrants and their children" as if they formed a solid block moved by self-interest alone; they were actually composed of Italians, Jews, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, South Slavs, as well as the earlier Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians, and if they acted out of self-interest, they also showed a remarkably persistent attachment to the prejudices and loyalties they had brought from abroad. In addition to the immigrants, the Democratic coalition included the Negroes, the rural migrants, and the South. It was consequently torn by antagonism among its various elements, and thus there was always a different line-up carrying the Democratic ball.

The story is best told in Lubell's fascinating analysis of the leading Democratic precincts in Boston from election to election. In 1936 the Irish, the senior urban immigrant group in the coalition, had already weakened in their attachment to the Democrats: uncomfortable at the rapid rise of Jews and Italians, they were attracted by Coughlin's party. In that year, the Boston evidence shows the Italians as strongest in their Democratic attachment. Four years later, the war changed the line-up drastically: the heaviest Democratic losses were in the rural isolationist areas, which, as Lubell shows, were nothing but the regions settled by German farmers. In the cities, the defection of the Irish continued, and there were further heavy losses among the Italians. But these losses were made up by a stronger Roosevelt vote among Jews (and, elsewhere, among Poles, Czechs, and others from countries overrun by Hitler). In 1944, these lines still held firm, with Jews at the top of the list voting for Roosevelt. In 1948, however, the Jews dropped entirely out of the first-string Democratic line-up in Boston. As Lubell writes, "When Roosevelt died no group in the nation felt more homeless politically than the Jews." But now the Irish and Italian votes (and elsewhere the German vote) came back: Truman ran ahead of Roosevelt in Catholic (German and Irish) St. Paul, behind him in non-Catholic Minneapolis. Of course there were shifts in the non-city vote too throughout this period. But whether the farmers were for or against the Democrats, the big-city majorities were large enough to win the decisive states.

BUT was it sheer accident that each time the Democrats were able to put together a winning team? (Of course, it should not be forgotten that a majority in almost all these immigrant groups stayed Democratic all the way—the issue was generally whether 90 or 75 or 60 per cent of some group would vote Democratic.) Lubell argues that it was not accident. The dominant party in every epoch of American politics, he asserts (the minority party, too, one might add), is always a coalition composed of antagonistic elements—there were city artisans and frontier farmers in Jackson's Democrats, Eastern businessmen and Midwest farmers in the triumphant Republicanism of the 20's. The party always seems to be on the verge of flying apart, but it manages to maintain itself in apparently mysterious fashion as a center of constant energy, producing its regular majorities. What actually happens is that the loss of one of a pair of mutually antagonistic groups will increase the party's attractiveness for the other group, which will make up for the loss. Thus, it was easy to add up the potential Dixiecrat and Wallace votes in 1948 and prove decisively that Truman had to lose. But the loss of Dixiecrats meant that Truman could hold more of the Negro vote than a Missouri-born candidate might expect; while the loss of Wallace meant Truman could regain Catholic and other strongly anti-Communist votes that Roosevelt had lost.

But what makes the party dominant to begin with? Here Lubell argues that every

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

majority party combines "timely" elements—in this case, the immigrants' children, the Negroes, the city workers. He does not explain too clearly in just what sense these elements are "timely" (outside of simply being larger, which is obviously involved), and the Republican combination of businessmen and farmers "untimely." The crucial distinction would seem to be that the Republican elements want nothing that requires change in America: their political aim is to hold on to what they have, while the aim of the Democratic elements is to acquire something to protect. It is certainly odd that it is the groups demanding changes that should dominate politically in America. The matter is not simply one of there being more "have-nots" than "haves"; for when the railroads wanted land and subsidies they found the voters to rule states and dominate the nation; when, having acquired wealth, they were concerned only to protect it, they lost their power. The immigrant groups and city workers have become for a time the "dynamic" elements in American life, as the corporations were for a while before them.

But if this is so, then the Democratic coalition is in serious danger, for its adherents have now won political and material success, and have also become a conservative element, defending their gains. The unions are no longer successful—if they ever were—in bringing out the vote of workers, who now react to withholding taxes and inflation and even rent control with the same anti-administration feeling so long felt by businessmen. The Italians have elected a governor and a Senator in Rhode Island, mayors in New York and San Francisco; the Poles have elected a mayor in Buffalo; everywhere we find judges and high political appointees with the names of the "newer" immigration. The children of the immigrants now own their own homes, with federal support, and earn good money, with the help of federally supported unions. They now have something to protect, and the old slogans that five times put together a Democratic majority now divide as much as they once united them.

This division is most significant on the question of the Negroes. While the Negroes remained in the depressed status they had occupied since the Civil War, and the children of the immigrants and the workers who had come from the farm lived in slums, it was relatively easy for the Democrats to appeal to both of them at the same time and with the same slogans. What helped the urban workers helped the Negroes—relief, strong unions, easy loans—and what helped the Negroes did not hurt the workers. But when the Italians and Poles and Czechs and Southern-born native workers moved into "nice" neighborhoods and bought their homes and began to worry about property values and schools for their children, the matter became more complicated. For the Negroes were rising too—they were rising faster than any other element—which meant that many were moving into the Northern cities and crowding these "nice" neighborhoods, and many were looking for homes and good schools too. And while white and black may live together in relative tolerance in a slum, American middle-class ideology finds it impossible, in most communities, to accept the idea that middle-class—let alone lower-class—Negroes will make suitable additions to a "nice" neighborhood. A growing antagonism between two major elements in the heart of the Democratic country now threatens the coalition, Lubell believes. The Czechs of Cicero and the Negroes of Chicago are both staunchly Democratic; together they helped elect the administration which has now put on trial the town officials of Cicero for violating the civil rights of Negroes. How can they be held together in the same party? What can the Democratic party do about FEPC and discrimination in housing to satisfy both?

Lubell poses this problem with a finer appreciation of the processes of ethnic rise, adjustment, and conflict in America than any writer I know of. Who will champion the Negroes, who oppose them? The Jews have taken their stand with the Negroes; in Jewish regions in New York and Los Angeles that are being invaded by Negro urban settlements, the Jews, in contrast to other elements, have made considerable efforts to promote tolerance: it was in these Negro-Jewish borderland regions, Lubell points out, that Wallace drew a major part of his votes. In California, Jews voted in favor of a state FEPC: the Irish and Midwest and Southern immigrants voted against it.

The most crucial problem of the Democratic coalition has thus become whether the Negroes and their Jewish and other liberal supporters are to be isolated and forced out; or whether the coalition will maintain its twenty-year championship of the Negro and give up sections of the South and perhaps the Irish and other traditionally Democratic elements.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THERE is a great deal to ponder in Lubell's discussion of this problem. We in this country find it hard to accept the idea that ethnic identity and allegiance can be so important. And indeed, as Lubell points out, the ethnic label may just be a short-cut manner of identification of a socio-economic element: "What makes [the ethnic groups] so important politically is that having come to this country in roughly the same period, the so-called 'new' immigrants and their offspring shared common experiences in this country." What happens to them in this country may have more effect in creating an ethnic voting bloc than the common elements they bring from another country. The farmers who turned so decisively against Roosevelt during the war must have acted because they were Midwest farmers, as well as because they were of German descent. And without question, the East and South European immigrants and their children stuck with Roosevelt (and Truman) because they were workers, with workers' interests, as well as because of their ethnic loyalties. But beyond all "rational" explanations, there is something, for each of these groups, that is not easily explained. A strange combination of self-interest and ideology moves each of them; and we may find a group shifting as fiercely in its voting because of something that has happened five thousand miles away as because of something decisively and immediately affecting its livelihood.

Lubell does not speculate on the significance of these ethnic attachments for the problem of the development of a common American loyalty and nationality. Perhaps, like our politicians who will inevitably—but privately—size up the ethnic variety of the fields in which they plan to campaign, he takes it for granted that while the ethnic tie is good for a vote, the patriotism of each of these groups is simply not to be questioned. Indeed, it is worth considering to what extent the ethnic vote may be the very creation of the American party system. For, as Lubell writes, the existence of any prejudice, bias, or bent in any sizeable group of voters irresistibly suggests to the politician the possibility of a special appeal. It is the existence of a group of German American voters that leads a politician to take up an isolationist position: and whether he reflects a sentiment, or arouses it to exploit, is hard to determine. But in any case, it is important to observe that even the most demagogic disguise their appeals: no isolationist ever called on German Americans to support him out of a feeling for the fatherland; the appeal has always been couched in terms of the general interest. A less disguised appeal, indeed, might arouse in the voters of a special background a desire to demonstrate their Americanism, and thus defeat itself. And as long as everyone seems to agree that any appeal to a specific ethnic group not put in terms of the general interest is illicit, American loyalty would not seem to be significantly threatened by these subsidiary loyalties.

ALL this is only one part of Lubell's book, though the most important and the most interesting part. Lubell is a nationalist (in the proper sense of the term, not a disguised isolationist). He is most concerned with the question of establishing a strong and stable government, capable of meeting the nation's problems and of curbing those factions that would weaken national strength for personal gains. And he is deeply concerned with the deadlock between president and Congress that has prevailed since Roosevelt lost in the Congressional elections of 1938, and which, in Truman's second administration, all but paralyzed action on domestic problems. The president is elected by the cities, for they will decide which way the big states go; Congress is dominated by the rural regions. This fourteen-year struggle is raging more furiously than ever at a time when the most intelligent and subtle policy seems hardly enough to stop the Communist threat to Western Europe and Southeastern Asia, and ultimately this country. A weak government cannot properly manage the cost and impact of rearmament so as to exact equivalent sacrifices and prevent serious damage to the economy. It gives in to the demands of labor, the farmers, business, far more than a rearming economy can afford, and we see the result in a steady and increasingly serious inflation.

Neither party, Lubell believes, has any appropriate idea of what is demanded. The Republicans irrelevantly propose to weaken government controls when the most careful management of the national economy by government is essential. The Democrats, equally irrelevantly, continue to propose additional schemes of social reform which have no relation to the present need and can only divide their supporters.

Certainly Lubell is correct in thus outlining

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now complete in two volumes . . .

The Jews in Russia

by Rabbi Louis Greenberg

A comprehensive history of the position and progress of the Jewish struggle against discrimination and persecution in the significant period from the late nineteenth century through World War I to 1917.

VOLUME I explains the policies of the early tsars, the movements for emancipation, the personalities involved, and the Jewish contributions to Russian endeavor.

VOLUME II examines the increasing restrictions and the rise of Zionism in the years from 1881 to 1917, and was edited after Rabbi Greenberg's death by Dr. Mark Wischner.

Of the second book, the Jewish Book Guild commented: "Rabbi Greenberg has performed a notable feat of documentation and research in Russian, Hebrew, English and Yiddish sources. The result is a volume of indispensable value both to the student and the mature lay reader."

Volume I $3.00

Volume II $4.00

At your bookseller

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the main problem of American politics. It seems to me, however, that he does not distinguish sharply enough between the line of the Democratic party—and of Truman in particular, who still plans to win elections for it by flaying economic royalists—and the actions of the Democratic administration, which with considerable intelligence has organized a program of resistance to world Communism, using the economic royalists themselves in important positions. I think the main problem is that the truly national policy the Truman administration has developed is crippled by the violence of partisan struggle and has to be conducted with considerable dissimulation and evasion in the face of Congressional attack. Domestically, it is true, it is the administration's desire to hold together its coalition, rather than the ruthless attacks of its opponents, that harms our economic mobilization policy.

But how are we to get a government capable of resisting the crippling demands of the different sectors of the economy and able to carry on its policy with some confidence that it represents a more or less united nation? Lubell is most attracted by the idea of a reshuffling of the elements of the two parties, producing a new majority of great strength and authority —but he sees no ground for expecting anything like that. No new elements are rising in American society, such as those which made the Democrats our majority party—though here Lubell seems to me not to take sufficiently seriously the weakening of the Democratic allegiance of the South and of various Northern elements on the civil rights issue, which he himself so well analyzes. Next best perhaps would be someone who could by his personal authority alone moderate the violence between the parties and conduct an effective national policy; Lubell is too sober, however, to think there is much hope for that, either. Even if Eisenhower should win, he foresees no decisive change in the deadlock that has ruled American politics so long.

A SUMMARY of this book is in continual danger of running not much shorter than the book itself: I have hardly referred to interesting chapters on the South; on labor; on the farmers; to a fascinating discussion of Truman's role as president, and of the "border politician" who helps resolve the conflicts between president and Congress and between the antagonistic wings of the ruling party. Indeed, the only serious defect of this book is that it is too short for all it has to say. There is such a density of facts and ideas that Lubell has often not given himself enough space to work out the full implication of all he is saying; as a result, there are a number of apparent and real contradictions. Certainly if the book had been twice as long, the apparent contradictions would have been eliminated, and the real ones would have come out sharply enough for Lubell to make a more concentrated effort to handle them. But where the sheer increase of enlightenment produced by a book is so great, some contradiction is a forgivable sin.

A Good Mind and the Good

THE NEED FOR ROOTS. By SIMONE WEIL. Translated from the French by Arthur Wills. Putnam. 302 pp. $4.00.

Reviewed by LIONEL ABEL

I FIRST read *The Need for Roots* in Paris when Gallimard issued it in 1949, and at once told my Parisian friends that I thought it the deepest work to come out of France during the whole war period. They were as surprised by my enthusiasm as I was perplexed by their coldness; in Paris, you expect your friends to agree with you, and when they do not you know something real is at stake. Now most of the persons to whom I spoke about Simone Weil had known her, having contributed during the 30's, along with her, to *La Condition Ouvrière,* a left-wing review edited by Georges Bataille and Boris Souvarine. These people would not praise her or hear her praised. They did not want to admire her; moreover, they were convinced they did not have to. I do not think they were much influenced by the fact that the Catholics were then bruiting her name. (The same persons admired Claudel. It would be so much nicer to despise him, but seeing that one couldn't, wasn't he admirable?) But nothing could make them accept as inevitable the mounting interest in Simone Weil. One, a historian, did not scruple to attack his own views when they happened to coincide with hers. "Where considerable goodness is present," he told me, "I can never believe there is much intellect."

Simone Weil was committed to the very opposite view. She did not expect to find much intellect where good was not abounding.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What is more, she did not find it even where the whole world does. She did not find great beauty in Racine's plays, which, except *Phèdre*, were not written in "a state of holiness"; and she did not find great thought in Descartes, to whom she denied the title of philosopher: it seems that he showed a petty, property-minded interest in his own ideas, and sometimes left out steps in his demonstrations just to keep other savants from guessing what he was about. Now these judgments are self-defeating. We ask at once: what is the intellectual meaning of purity if with impure motives one may be Descartes? What artistic meaning has "holy" inspiration if, lacking it, one may write *Andromache* and *Bérénice?*

But I do not want to argue here against Simone Weil's case for the identity of intellectual and moral perfection. My point is simply that her attitude cuts under the presuppositions by which most intellectuals justify their lives, namely, that man is limited, and can achieve one kind of excellence only by sacrificing others, and must choose, as Yeats has put it, between "the perfection of the life or of the work." For Simone Weil, to make such a choice was to consent to imperfection, intellectual as well as moral.

So, paradoxically, it becomes of ethical interest to justify the value of Simone Weil's work solely on its intellectual side. But can one do so successfully? Did she indeed touch that "focal point of greatness" she speaks of in *The Need for Roots*, "where the genius creating beauty and the genius revealing truth, heroism and holiness are indistinguishable"? From T. S. Eliot's admirable introduction to her essay, it would appear that in his judgment she did not, for he quotes with approval Father Perrin's remark that "her soul was incomparably above her genius." His judgment may be qualified—Eliot qualifies it finely—but I do not think it can be set aside. A restatement of the leading ideas in *The Need for Roots* would not show Simone Weil to be a great or even an important political thinker. If she is important, it is because she makes drastic distinctions that are deeply meant. If she is great, it is because when speaking on the great questions her whole soul is in what she says. She may well seem more important when she is speaking to you than when you are speaking of her. And yet. . . .

In *The Need for Roots* we read: "In Giotto, it is not possible to distinguish between the genius of the painter and the Franciscan spirit; nor in the pictures and poems produced by the Zen sect in China between the painter's or poet's genius and the state of mystical ecstasy; nor when Velasquez places on the canvas his kings and beggars, between the painter's genius and the burning and impartial love that pierces to the very depths of people's souls." Similarly, it is not possible, I think, to distinguish in Simone Weil between the purely intellectual ardor that wishes to see clearly, and the sisterly concern for the human soul that is always the object of her regard.

The Need for Roots was essentially an act of goodness. Let us recall the circumstances in which the essay was written. Simone Weil was in London during the war. She had requested that the Free French Committee have her parachuted into occupied France so she could participate actively in the Resistance. Only when convinced that she could serve no useful purpose in France, did she take up the task of examining what should be said there. It is probable that the intelligence is keenest when detached; but perhaps detachment, to be human, ought not to be deliberate, but fated; and the example of Simone Weil suggests that when detachment is really fated, it may be anything but cold.

In discussing what should be said to the French under the conditions of occupation, Simone Weil was led to consider the whole question of modern society. Yet I hardly think that what counts most in *The Need for Roots* are its generalizations, often speculative, on religion, the state, science, tradition (or, as she calls it, "rootedness," from which concept her essay takes its name). It is when she touches on specific, immediate questions that she is incomparable: confronting them, she is able, undismayed by urgency, to maintain a sure and intuitive grasp of the structure of the valuable. She suggests Antigone, not Plato.

Take, for instance, her solution to the problem of how to renew French patriotism. For the traditionalists, of course, the problem was simple: one had only to stress France's past glory. But Simone Weil saw that the past glory was inseparable from past crimes—committed by the French as a nation as well as a state. She did not hesitate to note in this essay, written at the request of a political group whose symbol was the Cross of Lorraine, that because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Jeanne d'Arc's connections with the Monarchy "fallen into despotism," the people of Paris had not supported her. Even less acceptable than the attitude of the traditionalists was that of the liars, of those who said, "France is the truth." "France," said the truthful Simone Weil, "lies and needs to lie." Yet patriotism was necessary, even morally necessary, for if it acts as "a dissolvent of morality" in time of peace, "the contrary takes place during wartime." How to be a patriot without endorsing the misdeeds of the French state? How admit them, and be a patriot?

Here Simone Weil put forward a completely original solution, and one perfectly appropriate to the conditions in which "the souls and bodies of Frenchmen found themselves"; she elected for a patriotism based not on achievements, military, scientific, or literary, but on "compassion." "One can love France," she said, "for the glory which would seem to insure for her a prolonged existence in space and time; or one can love her as something which being earthly, can be destroyed, and is all the more precious on that account. These are two distinct ways of loving. . . ." She pointed out that the second way of loving France was the only one now possible to the mass of the people: ". . . if their country is presented to them as something beautiful and precious, but which is in the first place imperfect, and secondly very frail and liable to misfortune, and which it is necessary to preserve and cherish, the people will feel more closely identified with it than the other classes of the population. For the people have a monopoly of a certain sort of knowledge, perhaps the most important of all, that of the reality of misfortune." Such a patriotism would not be likely to degenerate into chauvinism, for, she writes, "compassion tends to universalize itself."

On this question of patriotism, something more than intelligence was required for a solution satisfying to the intelligence itself; that "something more" was Simone Weil's moral intuition of a content in national feeling that was deeper than self-love. Her whole moral attitude, in fact, was based on the conviction that if, on the one hand, self-love was very powerful, on the other hand it was not a fundamental reality. She never accepted the view, so widespread nowadays, that egotism "properly" directed is itself a positive value. In politics, one must struggle against the self-love of the nation, but also against the self-love of the class, even of the working class. But to struggle politically against the self-love of the class or of the nation one had first to conquer one's own. The destruction of the ego, she believed, was fundamental to the assumption of a true social attitude; political understanding rested on the capacity of a person to depersonalize himself, to become an "impersonal person."

Let us note how much more intelligent is this criticism of self-love than the anti-individualism of the Bolsheviks, with which it is not to be confused. The Bolsheviks were indeed opposed to the self-love of the individual, but not, like Simone Weil, on intellectual grounds. They wanted the individual to sacrifice himself for the party or the class; but this was a matter of practical necessity; they did not believe self-love to be superficial; their point was not that the individual should arrive at a deeper vision of reality; what they wanted was merely to make use of him. And when the individual is regarded in this way, it appears at once that, in fact, he can never be of any real use at all. This comes out in the following story I have heard told of Lenin: To a young Communist who exclaimed: "I would give my life for the party!" Lenin replied mockingly: "That's easy. But would you pimp for the party?" Which is as much as to say, "And even if you did that, it would be nothing."

We read in Simone Weil's *Cahiers:* "Learn to give as if you were begging." Evidently the struggle against self was a hard one. I think we must bear her whole attitude in mind if we are to understand what prompted her in England, during the war, to refuse to nourish herself better than could the lowest-paid workers in France. It is said that her death was induced more quickly by this course, and some people have found this action bizarre. But if we consider the monstrous force and myriad disguises of self-love, and take into account her view that it is the main obstacle to any real truth in personal as well as in political life, and above all, if we have been illuminated by any insights she derived in struggling against self, we should be able to see her death as an unfortunate accident befallen in the line of duty. We read recently of a star baseball player, valued by his team, breaking his leg during training in making a slide not even needed to win a game, and we do not find the player's daring wilful. We should see her death, I

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think, as a consequence, not of sternness towards herself, but of something more like zest, and we should see such zest as an eminently intellectual thing.

Middle East Confidential

BLOOD, OIL AND SAND. By RAY BROCK. World. 246 pp. $3.50.

Reviewed by MORROE BERGER

BLOOD, OIL AND SAND offers the globe-trotting journalist's standard mixture of frenetic prose, pointless anecdote, name-dropping, innuendo, aimless detail, dopestering, miscellaneous information, warnings to the folks back home who are serenely unaware of "powder kegs" all over the world. The pity of it is that the reporters who write these books seem so often to be better than the books.

Mr. Brock, for example, after fifteen years of reporting from the area, knows well enough the challenge that the West faces in the Arab-Islamic world, the Soviet Union's goals there, the social and cultural backwardness, the way political passions engulf political judgments. He touches on all these important matters but does little to enlighten us with new facts or perceptive interpretations. Instead, he takes great pains to make the same points in different ways, but always in purple prose and in the tone of one who understands things better than we complacent stay-at-homes do. All too seldom he does come up with a promising line of thought, as when he points out that Moslem nationalism lacks a program of fundamental economic and social reform, but he quickly abandons this kind of thinking to talk about the "usual quota of professional ladies" at Shepheard's.

This is what is often called injecting "local color" and livening up a book about a serious subject. Mr. Brock fills his disjointed chapters with such phrases as: *smoldering discontent, pukka sahibs, bloody old Muddle East, fly-ridden Egyptian capital, roiling ocean of Arab nationalism, sluggish vipers which haunt the tombs of the Pharoahs and the reeds and grasses on the Nile;* instead of making his book more interesting, this writing only makes it more difficult to follow. Perhaps the high point is reached in Mr. Brock's references to King Ibn Saud as "Ibn," or, worse still, "young Ibn" when he covers the ruler's youth and early manhood—equivalent to calling an American "Mr." or "young Mr."

In accordance with the tone of omniscience that characterizes the whole book, Mr. Brock makes several claims that may be warranted by the facts but which he certainly does little to document. He says that war between Russia and the West is inevitable because American "power and influence" in the Middle East have been so seriously undermined, and he charges that this undermining of American influence is the work of Communists and fellow-travelers in the State Department. But the closest he comes to documentation of this claim is the mention of the particular countries where the United States is represented by diplomatic missions "loaded with dead wood, burdened with unimaginative and uninspired foreign service hacks, and tainted with left-wing sympathizers."

Mr. Brock bitterly criticizes American policy in the Middle East. Again he is perfectly aware of the problems involved in the subject he discusses so offhandedly. For example, he asserts that, "like it or not, the best allies of the United States in the vast Middle East are 'strong men,' some of them corrupt and all of them subject

Vandalism—against Jews from Massachusetts to Miami, Philadelphia to Los Angeles

Character Assassination — the attempted smear against Anna M. Rosenberg

Murder—of a respected Negro schoolteacher, the Florida Christmas dynamiting

—are a few of the shocking case histories from **THE**

Troublemakers

The new Anti-Defamation League report by ARNOLD FORSTER and BENJAMIN R. EPSTEIN

► "It's more than a book—it's a bombshell!!" —WALTER WINCHELL

► "Its behind-the-scenes account of the Rosenberg case is sound history, as suspenseful as a detective story." —SEN. WAYNE MORSE

Just published • $3.50 everywhere • **DOUBLEDAY**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to the internal stresses and strains of their uneasy countries." I assume he means that frequently, as in the case of Turkey under Mustapha Kemal, or perhaps Iran under General Razmara, whose assassination preceded the British-Iranian oil crisis, and perhaps Syria today under Colonel Shishekly, it seems to be only a dictatorial regime that can provide the political stability and assure the social and economic reforms that are needed to develop democracy and a wholesome form of nationalism. But Mr. Brock can't get away long enough from his talk of fleshpots and intrigue and violence to bite deeply into these supposedly "serious" and "heavy" problems. Nor does he, in his brief comments on the "failure" of American policy in the Middle East, consider the tough dilemma this country faces in pursuing seemingly contradictory goals there: on the one hand, we want to encourage national independence, but on the other hand we want to promote political stability in the face of the worldwide Communist threat of aggression and incitement to chaos. Or again: on the one hand, the United States would like to see Egypt and Tunisia, for example, fully independent, but on the other hand the United States hesitates to oppose England and France, who are so important to the success of American policy in Europe.

Such problems lie far beyond *Blood, Oil and Sand.* Perhaps Mr. Brock, having got this supposedly "popular" book out of the way, may turn to one that would give the Middle East the sort of attention its significance for the West warrants. This book does little more than indicate he knows some of the right questions to ask.

Concentration Camp Novel

SPARK OF LIFE. By ERICH MARIA REMARQUE. Translated from the German by James Stern. Appleton-Century-Crofts. 365 pp. $3.75.

Reviewed by HEINZ POLITZER

SINCE *All Quiet on the Western Front* Erich Maria Remarque has been a virtuoso in playing with deadly serious issues. It was exactly the blend of a seemingly unimpeachable realism with a fashionable irony that first established his success. Through an almost uncanny flair for the topicality of his themes he endeared himself to the progressive readers in pre-Hitler Germany and, after 1933, to the attentive ones abroad. The air of the *vieux combattant,* of the German liberal, vintage of 1929, provided him soon with the mystery of the perennial refugee, the eternally Lost Son. In many disguises he went through his own books, brutal and elegant, indecipherable and entertaining, as uncertain of himself as he was sure of his appeal.

That Erich Maria Remarque, for the first time in his career, has been misled in the choice of his subject, might easily be read as the symptom of the end of an era. For better or worse, the time of Germany's "outer emigration" has come to its close. And though it is still difficult to distinguish any new voices of relevance among the young German writers, though the surviving members of Germany's "inner emigration"—those who stayed at home under Hitler to resist the regime more or less sincerely, more or less effectively—show but little promise of coming to terms with the new reality surrounding them, we face this end as an almost deadly isolation and insecurity in a skilled and representative craftsman like Remarque. Out of sheer lack of orientation the virtuoso has begun to take himself somewhat too seriously.

SPARK OF LIFE deals with a German concentration camp on the eve of the German collapse of 1945. It follow closely the "death and transfiguration" pattern of this type of story. The prisoners' chorus from Beethoven's *Fidelio,* which is sounded at a climactic point of the action, is meant to serve as a leitmotif; however, the message of the book does not transcend the triviality of its last dialogue: "It is good to be alone for once, Ruth." "Yes. As though we were the last men." "Not the last. The first." The theme of transfiguration has been reduced to one of mere survival—which is a theme of biology rather than literature; the victorious fanfare of Beethoven's idealism has been tuned down to a statement of the atrocious inhumanity of the jailers and the equally atrocious dehumanization of the prisoners. This, of course, is not Remarque's fault, but the fault of the rapid petrification and mechanization of tyranny since the days of Napoleon and Beethoven's Pizarro. Remarque's mistake consisted only in applying the wrong seasoning to a wrong dish.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The concentration camp, in short, is no subject for a treatment that aims at mass entertainment at a slightly more than middlebrow level. To my knowledge there are in German letters only two presentations of this subject which—if the idiom is permissible here—live up to its implications: Eugen Kogon's *Der SS Staat*, where the theme is approached with scientific exactitude and curiosity, and F. Torberg's novella *Mein ist die Rache* ("Vengeance Is Mine"), where the camp is relegated to background material, and by this process of detachment the writer is enabled to condition and determine a story that aims far beyond any indictment of historical realities. Remarque's novel, on the other hand, is completely focused on the (fictitious) concentration camp of Mellern; the outside remains a vague scenery: the city which serves as a target for Allied bombings, and thus becomes a signal of the impending liberation; the railway which is used for transportations from this "mild" camp to extermination centers; the road over which the first American tank is going to rattle; the sky which is a mirror of the prisoners' moods of gloom, despair, and revolt. In these confines live only skeletons and marionettes, puppets of self-pity and caricatures of hatred; and the spark of life that flickers here is an *élan vital* stripped down to the half-mad reactions of the starved and beaten ones. It matters little that we find, towards the end, a discussion between the hero, Skeleton 509, and his Communist friend Werner about the politics of the future and human values in general. This declaration of principles has not grown out of the hero's predicament, nor did it arise from the author's own experience. It is simply pinned on the book as a tag to qualify it as handy reading material for the readers of 1952.

Erich Maria Remarque still calls a spade a spade, even and especially when a man's skull is smashed by it. But this time his realism is not any longer balanced by the overtones of his melancholic and mundane wit. Atrocity heaped on atrocity produces nothing but the effect of utter indifference: the reader's imagination, still interested in the fate of the individual, refuses to cooperate. What remains is a long-winded catalogue, a collection of data which is excluded from the archives—where it should belong and whence it came—by the fictitious embellishments of their presentation. The mere dance of death can never make a novel. It does not do so here.

Birth of Modern Hebrew

TONGUE OF THE PROPHETS. By ROBERT ST. JOHN. Doubleday. 377 pp. $4.00.

Reviewed by RALPH WEIMAN

THIS book is the first extended study of Eliezer Ben Yehuda and the revival of Hebrew; and it is written, not as one might have expected by a professional Hebrew scholar, but by a novelist and journalist who during a stay in Israel developed an interest in the man who had dedicated his life to the restoration of a dead language. Thanks in considerable measure to the help given him by Mrs. Ben Yehuda and others, Mr. St. John has written the best account to date of Ben Yehuda's career, and the fullest description of the process by which Hebrew was transformed from a written language into one of the important modern vernaculars.

In one place the author speaks of Ben Yehuda as the "only man . . . who almost singlehanded revived an ancient language" and his book leaves one with the impression that the Hebrew revival was the idea and work of one man fanatically pursuing his course in the face of intense opposition. Now it is true that the restoration of Hebrew was a unique event in history—we have no other example of a language ceasing to be spoken and then being revived at a later period—but if we examine the matter more closely than *Tongue of the Prophets* attempts, we find that the idea was by no means new with Ben Yehuda.

In fact, with few exceptions, all who had dreamed of a Jewish nation again living in its own land had realized that the nation must have its own language and that the language must be Hebrew—in the 1870's and 1880's the argument was common that only Hebrew enjoyed prestige as the language of religion and literature and had symbolic value as the language of the Jews when they were an independent nation. Ben Yehuda himself was greatly influenced, for example, by a Jewish professor of oriental studies whose lectures he attended in Paris and who argued for the desirability and practicability of reviving Hebrew.

Another impression the reader is likely to gain is that Ben Yehuda "created" modern spoken Hebrew. True, Hebrew existed only as a written language. It was, however, a language of great richness and flexibility. Dur-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the Haskalah period and later, its vocabulary had been expanded and its syntactical structure made more pliable, so that it was possible to write in Hebrew on practically any subject. Given this basis, the task was for someone like Ben Yehuda to demonstrate that Hebrew need not serve exclusively as a literary language, the way Latin did during the Middle Ages, but could be used as a colloquial language as well. His success was due not so much to his fanaticism, as the book suggests, as to very practical factors. If, for example, all the Jews in Palestine at the time Ben Yehuda began his campaign had spoken the same language, Ben Yehuda might very well have failed in his efforts. It so happened that the Jewish communities there spoke a number of different languages—Yiddish, German, Russian, Polish, Arabic, Ladino, etc.—and there was a pressing need for a *lingua franca.* Only Hebrew could serve in that capacity because it was the one language Jews had in common, even though their knowledge of it might in many cases not extend beyond the Hebrew of the prayer book.

WHAT were Ben Yehuda's special contributions to the Hebrew revival? His greatest contribution was to prove by his personal example that Hebrew could be used as an everyday language—to demonstrate, as Professor Spiegel has expressed it in his *Hebrew Reborn,* that "Hebrew could become the language of life and home, wife and children, and of all daily needs." In this matter of using Hebrew as a spoken language, Ben Yehuda's fanaticism did indeed stand him in good stead. He refused to make the slightest compromise. He spoke only Hebrew in his household and his children were permitted to hear no other language. His was the first family in over two thousand years to use only Hebrew and his children were the first in over two thousand years to speak Hebrew as their mother tongue. Equally important was his success in winning over to his idea many friends who as authors, journalists, teachers, etc. were instrumental in promoting the use of spoken Hebrew and in making it the language of instruction in the schools.

Ben Yehuda's second important contribution was a philological one: he further expanded the vocabulary of Hebrew and helped make it adequate for all modern needs. Mr. St. John is right in emphasizing as he does the importance of Ben Yehuda's *Complete Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Hebrew.* Ben Yehuda spent a lifetime reading everything that had ever been written in Hebrew and recording every word and meaning. He restored words that had fallen into disuse, adapted others to apply to modern objects and concepts, and whenever he could not find a suitable term, invented his own and popularized it through his dictionary and through his newspaper articles. His contribution to the modern Hebrew vocabulary is little short of amazing. In his dictionary each of his own suggestions is marked with a special symbol, and as one leafs through the volumes one finds it difficult to believe that a single man can have contributed so many words to modern Hebrew. Hundreds upon hundreds of common words—*dictionary, newspaper, airplane, brush, soldier,* etc., etc.—turn out to be coinages of Ben Yehuda.

So, while it may be an exaggeration to say that Ben Yehuda singlehanded revived Hebrew, or to suggest that if not for him Hebrew would not be spoken today, it is surely true that no man in history has ever contributed as many words to a language. And that, after all, is a great achievement.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

NATHAN GLAZER is an associate editor of COMMENTARY.

RALPH WEIMAN, a specialist in linguistic analysis, wrote his doctoral dissertation on modern spoken Hebrew.

LIONEL ABEL, who has just returned from a long stay in France, has contributed poetry and literary criticism to various magazines.

MORROE BERGER, a staff member of the American Jewish Committee, has just been appointed assistant professor of sociology in Near Eastern studies at Princeton.

HEINZ POLITZER has been a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This *I Believe*

"THE CENTRAL THEME in our American heritage is the importance of the individual person. From the earliest moment of our history we have believed that every human being has an essential dignity and integrity which must be respected and safeguarded. Moreover, we believe that the welfare of the individual is the final goal of group life. Our American heritage further teaches that to be secure in the rights he wishes for himself, each man must be willing to respect the rights of other men. This is the conscious recognition of a basic moral principle: all men are created equal as well as free. Stemming from this principle is the obligation to build social institutions that will guarantee equality of opportunity to all men. Without this equality freedom becomes an illusion. Thus the only aristocracy that is consistent with the free way of life is an aristocracy of talent and achievement. The grounds on which our society accords respect, influence or reward to each of its citizens must be limited to the quality of his personal character and of his social contribution.

This concept of equality which is so vital a part of the American heritage knows no kinship with notions of human uniformity or regimentation. We abhor the totalitarian arrogance which makes one man say that he will respect another man as his equal only if he has '*my* race, *my* religion, *my* political views, *my* social position.' In our land men are equal, but they are free to be different. From these very differences among our people has come the great human and national strength of America."*

Published as a public service by

THE WELCH GRAPE JUICE COMPANY

J. M. Kaplan, President

*from *To Secure These Rights,*
The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, 1947

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RALPH E. SAMUEL & CO.

115 BROADWAY

NEW YORK 6, NEW YORK

COrtlandt 7-3987

Our weekly letter, commenting on the economic and political outlook, is available to investors.

Members

NEW YORK STOCK EXCHANGE

COMMODITY EXCHANGE, INC.

NEW YORK CURB EXCHANGE (ASSOC.)

KUTAY'S LODGE

BOX 160
ACCORD, N. Y.

RESORT FOR ADULTS
Ideal for Couples

Located in the Shawangunk Mountains in a location of signal beauty & charm. Private Lake — All Sports. American-Jewish Cuisine.

Brochure on Request.

MODERATE RATES.

Binders Available!

To collectors who have requested them, we offer binders for back issues of COMMENTARY.

ONLY **$2.50**

Address: **Subscription Dept., COMMENTARY, 34 W. 33 St., N. Y. 1**

CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

Help us deliver your COMMENTARY without delay. When advising us of a change of address, please indicate *both* old and new address. At least 4 weeks' notice is required in effecting a change.

THANK YOU.

Address:

Subscription Department

Commentary

34 West 33 Street

New York 1, New York

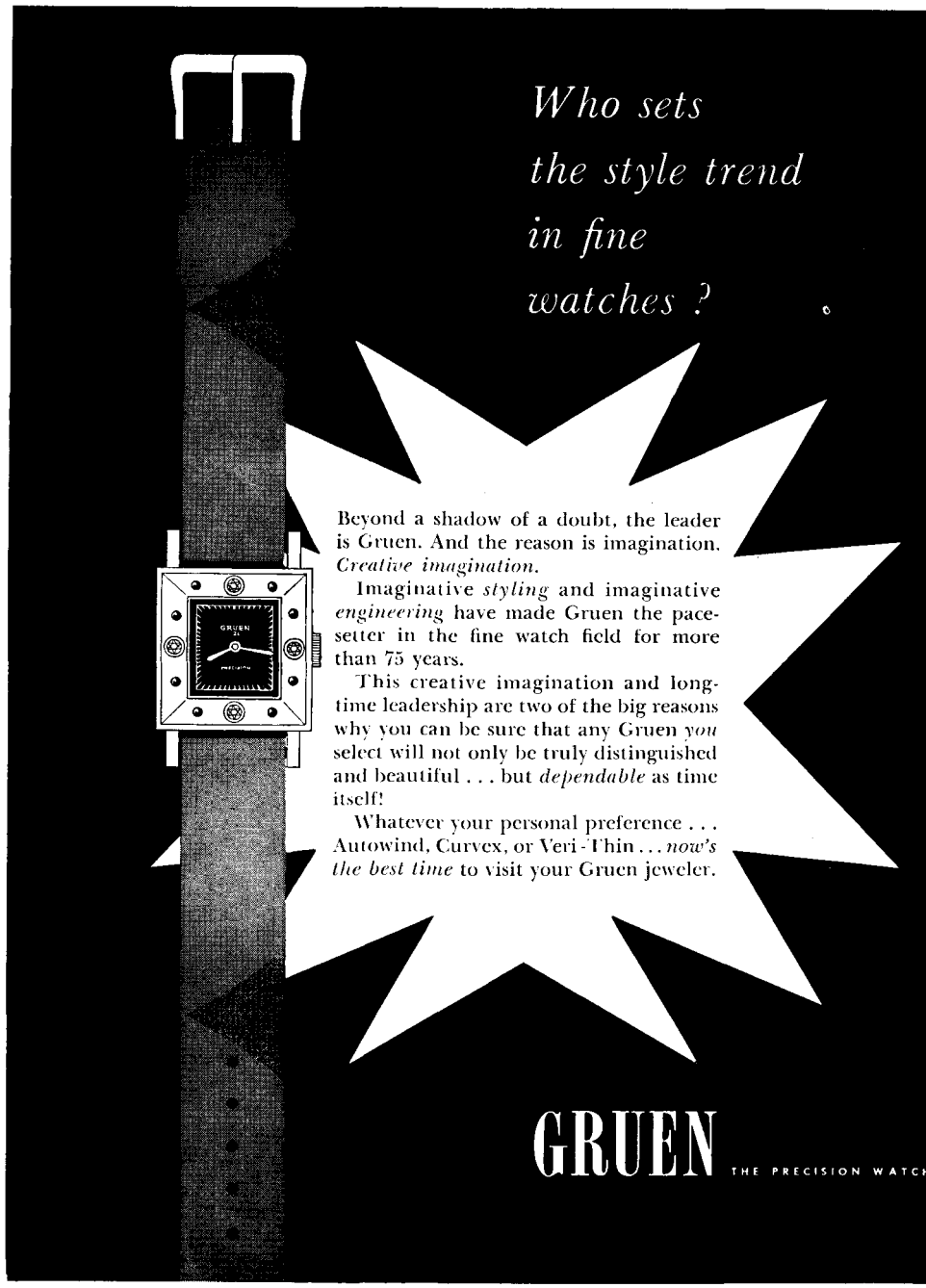
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Singing the Star Spangled Banner isn't enough... work for defense ...your country needs you

A Freedom Message from the American Oil Company

AMERICAN AMOCO GAS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED


Who sets
the style trend
in fine
watches ?
Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the leader is Gruen. And the reason is imagination. *Creative imagination.*
Imaginative *styling* and imaginative *engineering* have made Gruen the pace-setter in the fine watch field for more than 75 years.
This creative imagination and long-time leadership are two of the big reasons why you can be sure that any Gruen *you* select will not only be truly distinguished and beautiful . . . but *dependable* as time itself!
Whatever your personal preference . . . Autowind, Curvex, or Veri-Thin . . . *now's the best time* to visit your Gruen jeweler.
GRUEN
THE PRECISION WATCH

THE GRUEN WATCH COMPANY, TIME HILL, CINCINNATI 6, OHIO. IN CANADA: TORONTO, ONTARIO

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED